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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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MARCH 20, 2000

Kicking the Habit

The GOP's Big Church Splits Apart

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Can Do

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Those emphasizing bureaucratic government solutions in the Medicare debate have a new, improbable concern — the private sector won't rise to the challenge of providing meaningful drug coverage for Medicare beneficiaries. These individuals have little faith in the innovations of the private insurance market, a market that in the last decade has introduced new products and responded to consumer needs.

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

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Money for nothing

TO THE EDITORS:

When it comes to campaign finance reform, Charles Lane really doesn't get it ("Kohl Train," February 14). After all, he tells us that under the German system of partial public financing and free airtime for party advertising, nearly 80 percent of the country votes in national elections (almost double the U.S. rate), campaigns are much briefer and more issue-oriented, and "membership in a political party in Germany really means something." Yet to Lane the Helmut Kohl scandal proves that we shouldn't try to temper the power of money in politics, since "politicians still try to get more money." By his logic, we shouldn't have laws against speeding, selling liquor to minors, child abuse, or murder, either, since some people will break them anyway.

Jeffrey Rosen, by contrast, makes a serious argument against the whole strategy of limiting campaign contributions and spending as the way to achieve reform ("Talk Is Cheap," February 14). He's probably right that, in the Internet age, rich individuals and corporations will always find a way to spend their money on speech meant to influence elections, no matter what the laws say about private contributions and spending. That's why we need a different approach to reform, focused on the demand side rather than on the supply side. Instead of dreaming up ever more baroque ways of regulating private corrupting behavior (becoming indebted to big-money contributors), we should try rewarding virtuous behavior (candidates rejecting private contributions).

This is the core of the Clean Money approach. Our goal is to create an alternative way for candidates to finance their campaigns that would free them from direct dependence on private donors. This approach turns the tables on those critics who oppose campaign finance reform because they say it would limit free speech. Today the only candidates who can effectively speak to the voters are those with personal wealth or lots of connections to wealthy contributors. By contrast, a Clean Money system will lead to more political speech, as new candidates of all political stripes demonstrate public support and qualify for competitive financing.

ELLEN S. MILLER
Executive Director
Public Campaign
Washington, D.C.

Why New Hampshire Changes Nothing THE EDITORS
Jed Perl on Walker Evans
Tony Judt on Arthur Koestler
Alex Ross on Concerto Madness
THE NEW REPUBLIC
The Legend of Leon Smith
A STORY ABOUT BASKETBALL IN AMERICA
BY DAVID GRANN
TRB: Robert Wright

TO THE EDITORS:

Jeffrey Rosen creates a false choice between increasing regulation of campaign contributions and expenditures on the one hand and near-total deregulation on the other. This ignores a much more important world of realities.

Spending on federal elections costs anywhere from $2 billion to $3 billion per election cycle. Partial public financing could be achieved at a fraction of that cost. For example, funding could be given only to those candidates who have demonstrated wide grassroots support (e.g., 2,000 contributions of $20 or more) and who are outspent by those with wealthy special interest friends by a ratio of three to one or more. Further, funding could come from several sources—registration-fee revenues from lobbying firms representing the special interests, voluntary donations from taxpayers, and/or nominal excise taxes of, say, four percent on donations to politicians' election campaigns.

Yes, sewer money from special interests will always find ways to help its friends in power, but providing a significant amount of clean money would reduce the importance of the vested-interest money. And make no mistake about it—campaigns are already paid for by the consumer. Banking firms who give to their friends on the banking committee try to pass these costs along to bank consumers. And a donation of a few million dollars from the Florida sugar companies can result in a sweetheart deal that costs consumers billions of dollars in one law alone.

Amazingly, Charles Lane, in the same issue, suggests that "there is not necessarily any empirical evidence that politicians have granted favors in exchange for cash." To take one recent example, U.S. senators who voted for the patients' bill of rights got $27,000 each from the health care industry, while senators who voted against it got only $2,300. Is this merely the perception of corruption, or is it the real thing?

THOMAS O'BRIEN
Director for Research
Horizon Institute for Policy Solutions
Charlottesville, Virginia

Alive and well

TO THE EDITORS:

Say what you will ("They Only Look Alive," February 14) about New Hampshire being atypical, but, since the start of the modern New Hampshire presidential primary in 1952, only once has a candidate who didn't finish first in his party's primary gone on to win the White House. That was when Bill Clinton came in second to Paul Tsongas in the 1992 New Hampshire primary.

For many reasons—such as strong sitting presidents running for reelection—this near streak can be overemphasized, and it may not continue. But the record, which includes Eisenhower's victory over Taft in 1952, Nixon over Rockefeller in 1968, Carter over several candidates in 1976, Reagan over Bush in 1980, and Bush over Dole and Kemp in 1988, suggests that, like it or not, the primary's influence can't just be dismissed.

TOM ROWE
Durham, North Carolina

Two demerits

TO THE EDITORS:

I was surprised to find two gratuitous swipes at teachers' unions at the end of an otherwise interesting TRB column on the digital divide ("Net Worth," by Robert Wright, February 14).

The American Federation of Teachers does not support "ridiculous education requirements that confine thousands of smart and committed teachers to private schools." Yes, we believe teachers should be certified; that is, they should demonstrate knowledge of their subject matter and an ability to teach it. We also support alternative certification programs that enable talented individuals—including private school teachers, businesspeople looking for a career change, former military personnel, and others—to become public school teachers. When more than two million new teachers will be needed in our public schools, it makes no sense to support barriers preventing talented people from entering the profession. But teaching is a profession, and even smart

continued on page 41

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Drug warriors claim to be protecting kids.

In fact they are endangering our children!

- **Surveys show that 90% of of high school students find marijuana easy to get. They report marijuana is easier to buy than alcohol. You don't find anyone trying to sell booze in school yards since the repeal of alcohol prohibition![1]**
- **Studies of DARE, the widely used drug education program, show that it is ineffective and may even be harmful. Exaggerating the dangers of marijuana to grade schoolers creates skepticism among teenagers about the real dangers of hard drugs such as cocaine, heroin, alcohol and tobacco. This encourages experi entation and use.[2]**
- **Draconian mandatory sentencing for adults along with big money from the black market in drugs draws our young people into the world of crime.[3]**
- **Funds that should be spent for building new schools and colleges have been channeled into building new prisons for the incarceration of our young people.[4]**

[1] Johnston, L., Bachman, J. & O'Malley, P., National Survey Results from the Monitoring the Future Study, Vol. 1, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office (1999), p. 270, Table 30; online version of MTF survey; Luntz Research Companies, National Survey of American Attitudes on Substance Abuse II: Teens and Their Parents, New York, NY: National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (1996). *[2] Rosenbaum, Dennis, Assessing the Effects of School based Drug Education: A Six Year Multilevel Analysis of Project DARE, Abstract (1998 April 6); Ennett, S.T., et al., "How Effective Is Drug Abuse Resistance Education? A Meta Analysis of Project DARE Outcome Evaluations," American Journal of Public Health, 84: 13941401 (1994); Brown, J. H., D'Emidio Caston, M. & Pollard, J., "Students and Substances: Social Power in Drug Education," Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis (EEPA), 19, 1, (1997) pp. 6582.* *[3] "A Wiser Course: Ending Drug Prohibition," Report of the Committee on Drugs and the Law, The Association of the Bar of the City of New York, Volume 49, Number 5, June 1994; Steven Duke and Albert Gross, "America's Longest War," TarcherPutnam, 1993 p. 89.* *[4] Ambrosio, TaraJen and Vincent Schiraldi. (1997) From Classrooms to Cellblocks: A National Perspective. Washington DC: The Justice Policy Institute; National Association of State Budget Officers, 1995 State Expenditures Report, Washington D.C.: National Association of State Budget Officers (1996); Ambrosio, T. & Schiraldi, V., "Trends in State Spending, 19871995," Executive Summary February 1997, Washington D.C.: The Justice Policy Institute (1997).*

Politicians that justify the War on Drugs to "protect our children" are either fools or knaves.

For more information visit: www.csdp.org.

Common Sense for Drug Policy Kevin B. Zeese President 703-354-9050, 703-354-5695 (fax), info@csdp.org

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

National Lampoon

AMERICA TODAY FACES an odd disjunction, perhaps without precedent, between its assertions of global power and its deep disinterest in the truths and details of foreign places. As our power increases, so does our parochialism. Immigrants are remaking this country by the millions. France and Egypt and Korea and the Philippines and India send us their best technicians and entrepreneurs, creating the "universal nation" we claim to be. The flood is a testament to our success. Yet this success has given us an excuse for a kind of boredom with the rest of the globe. We sit astride the world but take in very little of it. The assertion that America is the sole superpower (we should put that expression to bed; it is lazy and it grates) masks a current American provincialism that puts past American provincialisms to shame.

The outside world has given this new provincialism additional warrant. If the world Americanizes (at least on the surface), why bother exploring it? If the videos in India and the young execs in Cairo mimic our own, why be curious? Americanization has killed anthropology, if you will. The vocation of reading and interpreting other societies has no place in this new order of things. We have quit ourselves of those obsessions with foreign causes and foreign places that once preoccupied this nation's talent. If all roads lead to Silicon Valley and to our capital markets, why bother with Hindi or Arabic? Who but the most obsessive and perverse among the young would contract some affection for a foreign land?

The travelogue, never an American forte, is now almost entirely lost to us. A book by a young British author on Yemen is a best-seller in England, I am told: the writer had made Yemen his home for 18 years or so. Our reading interests are different and closer to home. When our pundits venture abroad, it is to hector others, to taunt them about our success and their failures. There were once family traditions transmitted from one generation to the next, the children of missionaries who took an interest in specific worlds and delighted in the culture and the cuisine and the language of the Arabs and the Chinese and the Persians and the Indians. Those trails now belong to the past. (They weren't all pretty, those traditions of regard, but that isn't the point.)

The one recent exception to this disinterest was a boomlet that went under the label "emerging markets." We would send forth our MBAs and privatization experts; they stood ready to descend on Baku and the Caspian and "the Stans"—Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, etc.—and Vietnam and Warsaw and Budapest. People were turning away from the command economy, and we would sell them our financial services, teach them the way of the market. That quest wasn't noble, but it was at least a way foreign lands would beckon. Now even that boomlet has lost steam. It was harder to make deals in Baku than the Baku promoters promised. There were no fortunes to be made in Vietnam; the Vietnamese were unready for the new gospel and had maladies and dilemmas of their own. Less is said of central Asia now; there is no new Silk Road, no Great Game redux. There is squalor and plunder, and besides, there are local predators eager to claim the pickings for themselves—to strip the public sector of what little wealth remains in the state enterprises.

In distant lands there lingers a hangover from the past: a suspicion that Pax Americana comes with an appetite for dominion. But the truth is different. Even in the Balkans, where Pax Americana now supplies some of the order those lands desperately need, America's presence is tenuous. The cavalry was dispatched—at the last minute, after the horrendous slaughter in Bosnia and Kosovo made it difficult for our leaders to avert their gaze—but no bonds have been forged with those lands of sorrow. We supply the gendarmes but keep our distance, taking little interest in the places where our Armed Forces stand sentry. As a result, we have set the stage for a quick exit should the need to abandon these burdens arise. If the American imperium balances the nationalisms of the Balkans the way the Ottomans and the Hapsburgs did centuries ago, this modern imperium comes with the greatest of reluctance.

An era ago, when the American idea still faced rival doctrines, Americans showed a genuine curiosity, tinged with nervousness, about foreign places. We granted others the truth of their difference; we wondered what sorts of secrets, what mix of virtues and defects, lurked within them. There remained the possibility that the world held out surprises. But America has now broken with that uncertainty. We dominate the World Wide Web—70 percent of the material on the Internet originates in the United States—and in this dominance the technocrats and the advocates of the E-Truth see a release from the rigors of conflict. If the Taliban's leaders have their own website (and they do—visiting them in their chat room is the only recommended form of travel into their domain), and more and more Chinese surf the Web, the world must be ours, and the world must have been delivered from its furies and its politics. Chat rooms, by their nature, tame their participants. All places can thus be seen as approximations of our truths: worlds with Masters of the Universe like our own, with NGOs and "civil society" types, with Jeff Bezos and Steve Case and Steve Jobs wannabes. You can bark at this success, at this complacency, but it blows by, and nothing out there disturbs its sense that the world has been mastered and tamed.

The world, in America's eyes, has been closed up. The American model of "lean" government reigns. More expensive forms of government—of the kind that obtain in France and Germany and Sweden—are out of fashion and on the ropes, their social contract and welfare obligations too costly to maintain. There are no capital markets out there that match America's in their depth or receptivity to innovation. Our institutional investors rule the roost in the French bourse, and American notions of shareholder power wreak havoc with the cozier and more protected capitalisms of Europe and East Asia. The world races to catch up with America: in Spain the siesta goes by the wayside as Spaniards scramble to find a footing in a world revved up by American speed.

The success that is now America's is hard to quarrel with. It overwhelms everything else. There are no foreign stories worth meditating upon; it is our tales and melodramas and soaps and mergers that matter. The Syrians and the Israelis, Northern Ireland's Catholics and Protestants, the heaps of dead in central Africa: We pay them scant attention. The issues they raise—land, security, the fight of nationalisms—belong to a world now unfathomable to us. They compete for the front page with megadeals like the one between America Online and Time Warner. And, of course, they lose. What attention and curiosity we can muster goes into deciphering the deep and hidden meaning behind Steve Case's decision to wear a tie on announcement day, while the older Gerald Levin, from the old media, turned up in an open-collar shirt. On such matters we must, for now, feast.

FOUAD AJAMI

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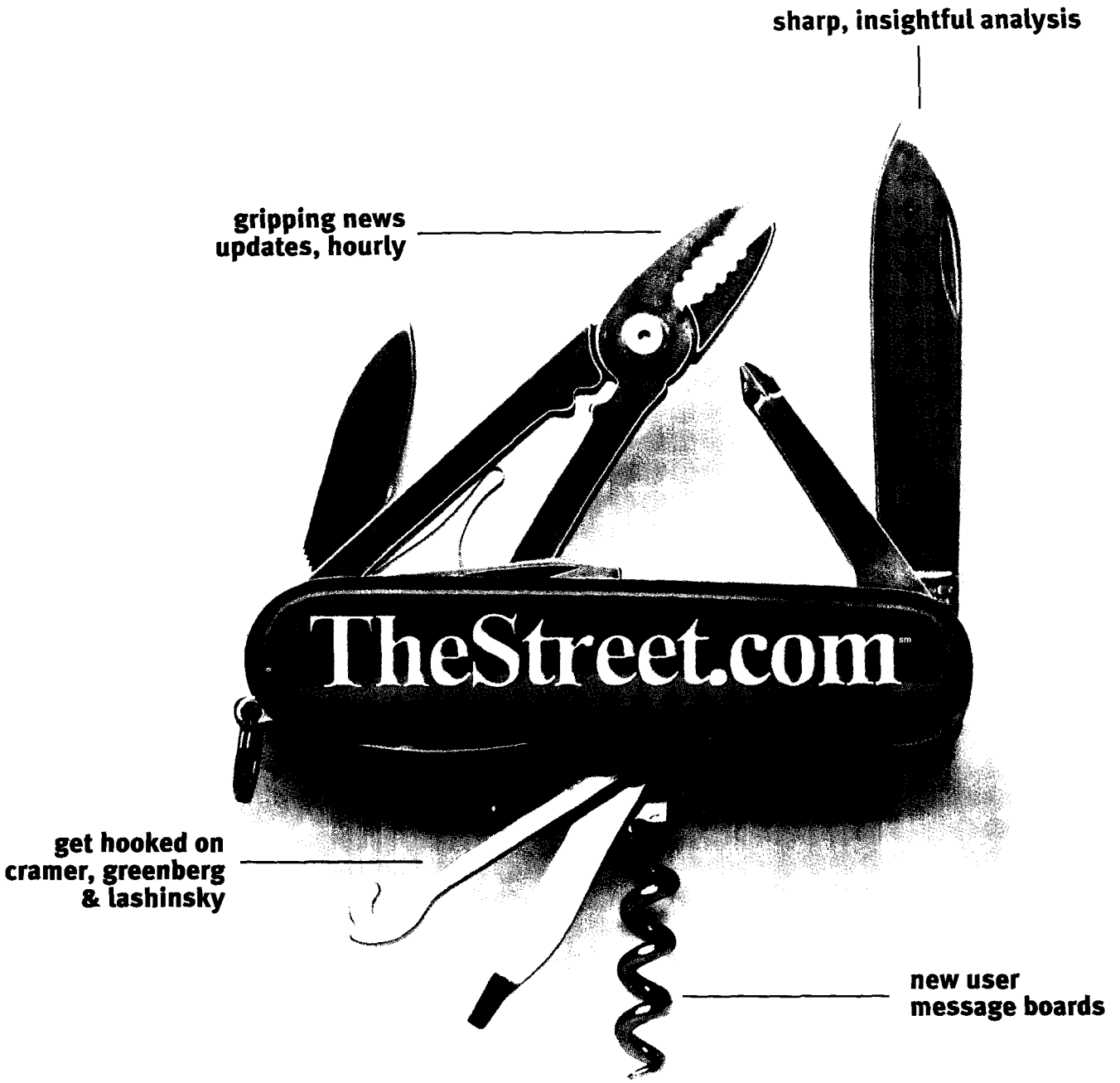

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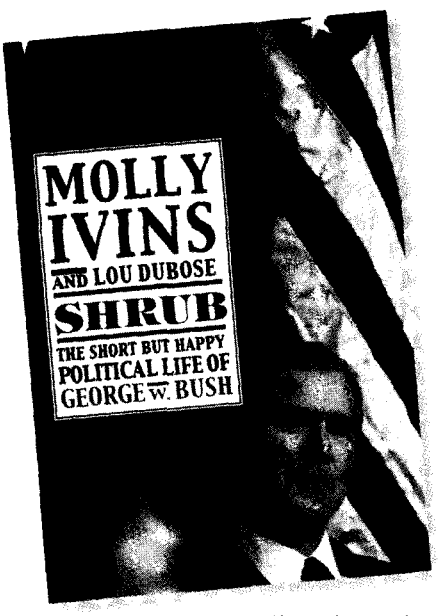

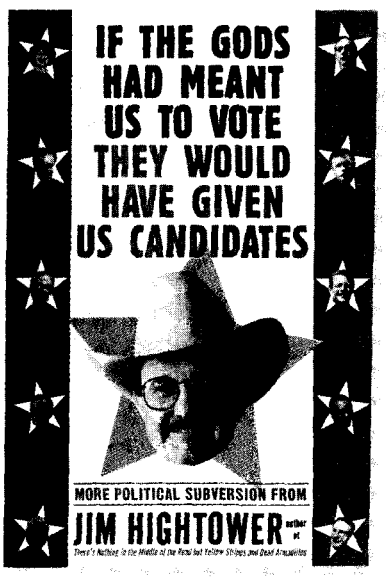

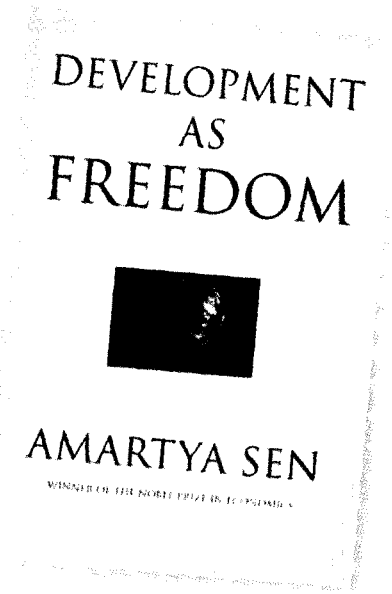

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Let Them Drive Cars

SAY YOU'RE A member of the working poor, playing by the rules, struggling toward the American dream. If you labor full-time at the minimum wage and take advantage of the Earned Income Tax Credit, you bring home about $1,200 a month. With food stamps, subsidized housing, and very careful budgeting, your family can just get by. But two things always threaten to knock you on the floor.

One, health care, gets a lot of attention from the public policy world. The other gets zero attention: your wheels. Try to go everywhere by bus and you'll spend your life commuting; picking up and dropping off kids becomes a logistical nightmare. Buy a car and the best you can hope for is a clunker that constantly breaks down. That $565 for a new water pump when you just spent $600 on a brake job may be what makes you give up and go back on the dole.

Washington, obsessed with grand, often symbolic issues, doesn't think much about whether someone looking for work has a car to get there. It should. In our movement-oriented economy, employees need to go where the jobs are; the government can make that possible by helping the working poor get reliable used cars. Instead, the government discourages it. If you own a car with a book value greater than $4,650—a figure set by Congress more than 20 years ago, when $4,650 bought something worth driving—you become ineligible for food stamps. Placing even a small down payment on a used car can also make you ineligible. Combined, these rules insure that anyone who gets food stamps—which includes not only those on welfare but also the working poor—either has no car or drives an old, pollution-spewing jalopy that brings nothing but financial grief.

Last month President Clinton proposed changing the rules on cars and the working poor. Because the plan was modest in scale, hardly anyone paid attention. Yet the president's proposal was excellent and important, the sort of small, real step that brings credit to government. The proposed legislation would essentially waive the $4,650 value limit for a food-stamp recipient's car, allowing states to set higher figures. Further, Clinton proposed that food-stamp recipients be allowed to put a down payment of $1,000 on a car without losing their eligibility. (If you fear the welfare Cadillac, don't: $1,000 down will not buy anything remotely fancy.) Finally, Clinton proposed that the working poor be permitted to save for car down payments in Individual Development Accounts—special bank instruments that low-income Americans can now use solely for college, first homes, and business start-ups. All told, this package of ideas, which originated with analysts Margy Waller and Mark Alan Hughes, would dramatically improve a lower-middle-class man or woman's chances of obtaining a safe, reliable car.

What Clinton's proposals recognize, and many commentators on the fate of the poor do not, is that to compete in today's job market, people simply must be mobile. Some three-quarters of Americans who receive public assistance live in inner cities or rural areas, while two-thirds of available new jobs are in the suburbs. It should come as no surprise, then, that studies show that low-income Americans are 25 percent more likely to hold a job if they own a car. The White House proposals also represent a welcome acknowledgment of the real world. Environmental lobbyists ritually denounce the automobile, extolling mass transit instead. But, while it may be desirable, improving mass transit is at best a long-term solution, since transit lines take years and billions of dollars to build. Reliable cars, on the other hand, would improve the job prospects of the working poor right away. Moreover, considering that any pre-1980 automobile emits almost 100 times as much pollution per mile traveled as a new model, every clunker taken off the road and replaced with a decent car is a victory for cleaner air.

It's even possible that Clinton's proposals could help alleviate the awful traffic jams that are becoming a way of life. Usually it is the clunkers—driven by day laborers, child-care workers, and other members of the working poor—that break down during rush hours, snarling the Beltway and similar roads around the nation. If the typical poor or lower-middle-class American had a car half as nice as that of the typical 17-year-old in the private schools where the policymakers send their kids, traffic might flow more smoothly. Sometimes the smallest ideas can have the most far-reaching impact. ■

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NOTEBOOK

SAVING PRIVATE BUSH: Mark Helprin is an author and Republican speechwriter best-known for penning lyrical odes to the warrior virtues. One of his oft-repeated themes is that soldiers—particularly those who have suffered in battle—make superior politicians. Helprin pounded home this notion to great effect four years ago, when he wrote Bob Dole's acceptance speech at the Republican convention. Helprin's speech waxed poetic about "family, and honor, and duty, and country" and lashed out at Clintonites who "never did anything real, never sacrificed, never suffered." Sounds like a pretty good rationale for John McCain as well. The trouble is that Helprin backs George W. Bush, and so the principles that were useful four years ago have suddenly become inconvenient. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* op-ed, Helprin excoriates McCain. "If John McCain wins the Republican nomination, he will have done so not by persuading the Republican Party but by overcoming it with the help of outsiders and by feverishly endorsing the accusations of its enemies," Helprin writes. "These are betrayals, plain and simple, and betrayals by any definition are acts that are hard to square with honor." So, to clarify Helprin's definition, honor is less about defending your country than defending your party. No amount of bravery as a POW can excuse a candidate who disagrees with his party's major interest groups and encourages Democrats and independents to vote in its primaries. With this cleared up, Helprin can get back to that lengthy poetic tribute to the superhuman nobility and courage of those who served in the Texas Air National Guard.

PLEASED TO MEET YOU, MR. FARRAKHAN: We'll say this for George W. Bush: He's not a hypocrite when it comes to pandering to the political fringes. Bush, of course, has indulged the right-wing kooks at Bob Jones University and unsuccessfully begged Pat Buchanan to stay in the GOP—because "I'm going to need every vote I can get." But you'd think that when it came to Al Gore's favorite demagogue, Al Sharpton, Bush would stand on principle. You'd be wrong. Indeed, there seems to be only one thing preventing Bush from kissing Sharpton's ring himself: the fact that it wouldn't do him any good. "He's not for me. He's not going to be for me. I won't be able to persuade him to be for me," lamented Bush in response to a question from Fox News Channel's Bill O'Reilly about whether the governor would meet with Sharpton. "You're asking me to go see a person that is—somebody that is, I'm sure, looking forward to railing on me when I'm the general-election candidate." So, if there were a chance of Sharpton supporting Bush, the Texas governor would meet with him in a heartbeat, Tawana Brawley and everything else notwithstanding? Bush's March lurch back to the political center is already making us nostalgic for February's lurch to the far right.

TARGET PRACTICE: Now that George W. Bush, with some help from Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed, has vanquished John McCain, there can be little doubt that he's plotting a Sister Souljah act to make himself more palatable to moderates, not to mention Zeus worshipers. May we humbly suggest Minnesota State Representative Arlon Lindner as an ideal target. Lindner, along with some of his fellow GOP legislators, recently proposed replacing the nondenominational prayer that usually opens the Minnesota legislative session with a religious choir singing a ditty called the Apostles' Creed. When Democratic Representative Michael Paymar, who happens to be Jewish, objected, Lindner blasted Paymar for his "irreligious left" view. In fact, it's worth quoting Lindner's thoughts at length: "You know we're told there's one God and one mediator between God and man. The man Christ Jesus. And most of us here are Christians. And we shouldn't be left not able to pray in the name of our God.... And if you don't like it, you may have to like it. Or just don't come." Let's hope the Texas governor doesn't "miss another opportunity."

REINDEER GAMES: Republicans have long fumed that most Americans think the Democrats are more committed to saving Social Security. That may explain why a recent National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC) fundraising letter, bearing the signature of Trent Lott, went to such lengths to accuse Clinton and Gore of "spending Social Security money on their left-wing social engineering programs." Among the "pure pork spending" attacked in the letter, which has been sent out to tens of thousands of the GOP faithful: "a program for reindeer herders in Alaska" and some $2.2 million to fix Salt Lake City's sewer system in time for the 2002 Winter Olympics. But Lott's letter left out a significant detail: The reindeer program was jammed into the budget by Alaska Senator and Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee Ted Stevens—a Republican. As for Salt Lake City's sewer repair, not only was it pushed by Utah's all-GOP congressional delegation, but, after John McCain criticized it as special interest pork, Kentucky Senator Mitch McConnell, chairman of the NRSC, defended the measure on the Senate floor. Queried by *The Washington Post*, NRSC spokesman Stuart Roy dismissed his group's appeal, which has been going out for months, as "a typical direct-mail snafu." But maybe the letter was more truthful than he realizes. GOP lawmakers often argue that we should give away any budget surpluses as tax cuts because Washington politicians can't be trusted not to squander the extra cash on pork. Who knew the Republicans were referring to themselves?

HOME FREE? Most observers assumed that once General Augusto Pinochet returned to Chile on March 3—free after 16 months of house arrest, thanks to British Home Secretary Jack Straw's decision that the 84-year-old former dictator was too infirm to stand trial in Spain for human rights violations—his legal troubles would be over. But, thankfully, that may not be true. Although Pinochet was thought to be immune from legal action—thanks to his position as "senator for life," which brings with it full immunity from prosecution—Chilean Judge Juan Guzman isn't so sure. Assigned by the Chilean Supreme Court to investigate possible human rights abuses by Pinochet in 1998, on March 6 Guzman asked

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the Santiago Court of Appeals to impeach Pinochet, thereby revoking his immunity. Without it, Pinochet would have to stand trial in the dozens of human rights lawsuits brought against him by Chilean citizens. On March 7, in an important gesture, the Chilean Council for the Defense of State (CDE), which represents the state in legal affairs, added its imprimatur to a long-standing suit against Pinochet and other generals for their involvement in the "Caravan of Death"—the execution of 70 dissidents in the days following the 1973 coup. Perhaps, finally, Pinochet will stand trial in the most appropriate place: the country in which his crimes were committed.

COMPASSIONATE CONSERVATISM? In an appearance on CNN's "Capital Gang" the night of Super Tuesday, conservative don Robert Novak offered yet more evidence that John McCain isn't a true conservative. "I heard a speech he was delivering in California," Novak grumbled, "in which he was saying, 'What are the issues we have today? Well, the issues are hungry children, the issues'—he listed a bunch of socially liberal Democratic concerns." Novak's "Capital Gang" sparring partner, Al Hunt, tried to argue that conservatives are against children going hungry, too, but Novak stood his ground: "What I'm saying is that is not a Republican issue." At least, not until those hungry kids start making bigger soft money donations.

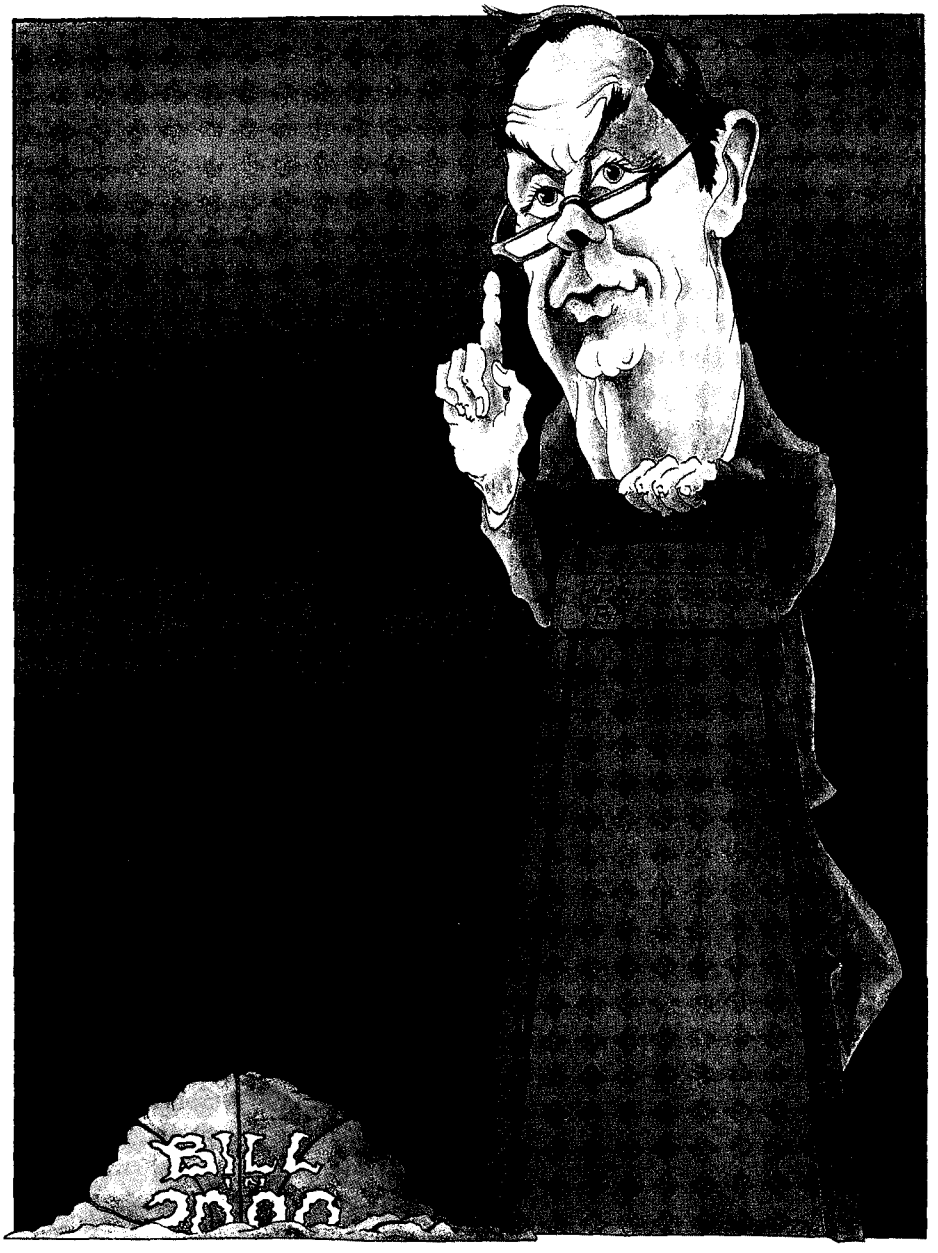
AND HE'D ALSO TALK TOUGH TO THE SOVIETS: At Maryland polling places on Super Tuesday, George W. Bush's campaign literature touted the candidate's tax cut. A section headlined GOVERNOR BUSH'S BOLD TAX CUT PLAN noted that the proposal "Balances the Budget." Balances the budget? The federal budget is currently running a surplus. To "balance" a surplus budget, one would presumably have to increase spending.

MULTIPLE CHOICE: For all the talk about journalists' love of John McCain, George W. Bush has a few media cheerleaders of his own—none more enthusiastic than *The Washington Times*. See if you can tell which of the following headlines are from supposedly objective news articles in the *Times* and which are from Bush-campaign press releases. (Answers printed below.)

(a) REAGAN'S SON SAYS McCAIN NOT LIKE DAD
(b) THE WHEELS FLY LOOSE ON McCAIN'S WAGON
(c) GOP GOVERNORS SLAM McCAIN AS HYPOCRITE
(d) GOP CATHOLICS BALK AT McCAIN'S TACTICS
(e) REPUBLICAN BASE STANDING BY GEORGE W. BUSH
(f) OPEN PRIMARY BENEFITS McCAIN; DEMOCRATS CAST ANTI-BUSH VOTES
(g) GOVERNOR BUSH SWEEPS PUERTO RICO, GUAM AND AMERICAN SAMOA

The Washington Times: *a, b, c, d, e, f*
The Bush campaign: *g* ■

VINT'S WEEK



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Why all conservative Christians are not the same.

Double Cross

By BENJAMIN SOSKIS

WHEN HE SET out last year on his crusade for the presidency, John McCain aimed to change his party's views about a lot of things: campaign finance reform, foreign policy, even tax cuts. But religion wasn't one of them. In fact, the Arizona senator's two decades in Congress had been marked by an evident lack of interest in the intersection of faith and politics. All of which makes it particularly strange that it is at this intersection that his candidacy seems poised to leave its most lasting impression.

Until the McCain campaign began calling Michigan Catholics to tell them about George W. Bush's speech at Bob Jones University, the dominant story about religion's role in American politics went something like this. Once upon a time, denominational differences divided white American Christians. Episcopalians looked down on Baptists. Baptists despised Pentecostals. Everyone feared Catholics. But, after World War II, Catholic upward mobility and Protestant ecumenism made such distinctions less and less important. And soon those distinctions were overwhelmed by another kind of religious divide: between the Americans whom the 1960s secularized and those whom secularization repelled. Ronald Reagan exploited this divide masterfully, cobbling together an alliance between churchgoing Southern evangelicals and churchgoing Northern Catholics. Catholics had traditionally voted Democratic, but in 1984 a majority of the most religious Catholics backed Reagan, as did 78 percent of all religiously active Christian conservatives. By the 1990s, the landscape, at least among white Christians, seemed clear: Republicans were the clerical party and Democrats were the anti-clerical party; denomination didn't matter.

At least, that was conventional wisdom until a month ago, when McCain, in a series of strange coincidences, upended it. The first coincidence was the order of the GOP primaries. In the 1980s, Lee Atwater and Carroll Campbell had moved South Carolina's primary forward to protect against insurgents coming out of New Hampshire. Last year, Governor John Engler, hoping to get some of the anti-insurgent credit himself, did the same for Michigan. Quite by accident, one of the most Catholic states in the nation followed one of the most evangelical. The second coincidence was McCain's Manichaean view of the world. Infuriated by the religious right's ruthless attacks on him in South Carolina, McCain, a man who agreed with conservative evangelical leaders on most issues, nonetheless decided they were his—and the GOP's—mortal enemies. And his campaign lashed back, telephoning Michigan Catholics to inform them of Bush's speech at anti-Catholic Bob Jones. The calls packed an added punch because of a third coincidence: Catholic resentment of the GOP leadership's recent decision to pass over a priest for the chaplaincy of the House. Individually, none of these factors would have mattered much. Together, they have exposed the supposed alliance between culturally conservative, devout Catholics and culturally conservative, devout evangelicals—an alliance at the heart of the GOP's claim to be America's majority party—as a myth.

In recent years, no one has tried harder to make that myth a reality than the leaders of the religious right. Two decades ago, Jerry Falwell praised Pope John Paul II as the "best hope we Baptists ever had" and welcomed Catholics into his Moral Majority. Ralph Reed called the alliance between Catholics and evangelicals "the most effective political force that the country had ever seen," and in 1995 the Christian Coalition formed a separate branch of its organization, the Catholic Alliance, to recruit Catholics into its ranks. Pat Robertson began lacing his public pronouncements with Vatican teachings and Catholic vernacular, and the Alliance mailed out a quarter of a million introductory solicitations to Catholics across the country.

Their inspiration, of course, was Reagan. Their problem was that while Reagan did indeed bring Catholics and evangelicals together, it was not, as Reed and Robertson wanted to believe, in opposition to secularization. The Reagan coalition was a coalition against liberalism: against military weakness abroad, against high taxes, against welfare and affirmative action. Moral issues per se—abortion, school prayer, gay rights—were a small part of it. Yet in the Clintonized political environment of the 1990s, with the cold war over and the Democratic Party's left wing defanged, those moral issues were the only foundations on which an evangelical-Catholic alliance could rest.

They weren't enough. A 1996 study by University of Notre Dame Professor David Leege revealed that half of all Catholics who regularly attend Mass consider themselves Democrats. In fact, *less observant* Catholics were the ones more likely to vote for the GOP. The belief that religious Catholics were gravitating en masse toward the Republican Party because of its stance on abortion or other moral issues was, in Leege's view, "historically myopic and sociologically mistaken."

The Catholic Alliance, which Robertson and Reed had hoped would attract half a million members, never managed more than 30,000. Catholic bishops, who opposed Robertson's and Reed's views on welfare and feared their proselytizing instincts, refused to distribute Alliance pamphlets in their parishes and demanded they include the disclaimer, "Catholic Alliance does not presume to represent the views of all Catholic Americans."

Ten months after its founding, the Catholic Alliance seceded from the Christian Coalition. The Alliance's director explained the break as a way to "address Catholics in the community who may be reticent about joining." One Alliance member put it more bluntly: the group was pushed out by "negative pressure from narrow-minded fundamentalists" within the Coalition. Today the Alliance, boasting more than 125,000 members, is led by Raymond Flynn, a former Democratic mayor of Boston and a man whose politics are defined much more by left-wing economics than by the moral agenda

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of the religious right.

What Robertson and Reed didn't understand was that while many devout Catholics dislike abortion and homosexuality, their personal opposition doesn't translate into support for legal prohibition in the way it does for evangelicals. While Catholic and evangelical doctrine both oppose abortion, Catholics are less likely to favor an outright ban than evangelicals. Similarly, half of all conservative evangelicals believe homosexuality is morally unacceptable and should not be tolerated, while only a quarter of active Catholics agree.

These figures underscore a Catholic distrust of what many perceive as heavy-handed evangelical moralism. Catholics, in general, are more comfortable with the idioms of personal responsibility than with those of biblical retribution. These discontinuities help explain the attitudes of Northern Catholics like Peter King, the pro-life New York representative who defected from the Bush camp to McCain after the Texas governor's Bob Jones visit. King once famously lamented, "We're going to turn ourselves into a party of barefoot hillbillies who go to revival meetings," suggesting that it is not merely the ideology but the tone of the religious right that he found offensive. And tonal dissonance can trump convergence on issues, creating an unbridgeable cultural chasm. For example, when William Donahue, president of the Catholic League, which monitors anti-Catholic discrimination, recalls his association with the Christian Coalition, he dwells on one particular indignity: nonalcoholic beer. They got along fine in the seminar rooms, Donahue admits, but when the Catholics and evangelicals met afterward and Robertson refused to allow the Catholics to have a mid-afternoon drink, Donahue decided that "the day we are going to come together as a really united coalition is further down the road than ever before."

He was right. In the wake of Bob Jones, many pundits have speculated that the GOP's Catholic-evangelical alliance is crumbling. That's half true. In fact, it crumbled long ago. It just took John McCain's insurgency for everyone to see it. ■

The neocons wake up.

Arguing the GOP

By Franklin Foer

Marvin Olasky was right. John McCain's campaign is crawling with Zeus worshipers. George W. Bush's evangelical crony was a bit opaque in his now-infamous article in the February 16 *Austin American-Statesman*, but he was on to something: Jewish neoconservatives have fallen hard for John McCain. It's not just unabashed swooner William Kristol, editor of *The Weekly Standard*. McCain has also won over such leading neocon lights as David Brooks, the entire Podhoretz family, *The Wall Street Journal*'s Dorothy Rabinowitz, and columnist Charles Krauthammer, who declared, in a most un-Semitic flourish, "He suffered for our sins."

The McCain campaign has inadvertently revealed a shocking fact about neoconservatism: it lives. Before the current campaign, most observers assumed that the movement's Jewish intellectual stalwarts had seamlessly assimilated into the post-Reagan conservative establishment, trading the City College debates of the 1930s for 1990s seminars at the American Enterprise Institute. Kristol became conservatism's most prominent TV personality. Even Norman Podhoretz wrote a "eulogy" for his movement, claiming that its triumph in the great ideological disputes of the age had rendered it obsolete.

But, with McCain, neocons have reemerged as a distinct group. They've decided they're not as comfortable in the GOP country club after all. And they've forged a new identity for themselves: anti-establishment "rebels." In the *New York Post*, Podhoretz has cheered McCain for "upending the old coalition." Kristol has goaded McCain to wage a "battle for the soul of the party." At times Kristol even seems to be reenacting his father Irving's struggles with the Democratic Party of the 1970s, only on the other side of the aisle. And, like his father two decades ago, Kristol is becoming a dissident among his own people. Because of his support for McCain, he has been hammered in the *National Review*, *The Washington Times*, and *Human Events* and badmouthed by Republicans throughout Washington. One conservative ominously told the *White House Bulletin*, "After McCain loses, it's Bill Kristol who's finished." So why did Kristol and company gamble on McCain? Why have the neocons descended from their think tanks and taken to the streets against the GOP?

When the senior Podhoretzes and Kristols broke ranks with the left decades ago, they were in a tizzy over its attitude toward welfare, crime, and the Vietnam War. The current spat, on the other hand, has little to do with ideology. It's hard to find a single issue on which Kristol and Bush, or for that matter Kristol and Pat Robertson, seriously disagree. *The Weekly Standard* has long complained about the GOP's knee-jerk libertarianism, for instance, but this problem doesn't afflict Bush. If anything, he envisions a larger federal role in domestic policy than McCain does—think of his statements on education and faith-based institutions. And Bush's foreign policy—a hawkish blend of idealism and realism—seems perfectly in sync with traditional neocon thinking.

The best explanation for the affection neocons feel for McCain has nothing to do with issues. It stems from the fact that they're Jewish intellectuals, and being a right-wing Jewish intellectual is tricky. Like their forefather Leo Strauss, the political theorist, the neocons consider religious revivals a useful antidote to moral relativism and cultural decadence. But they also share with Strauss, and with many other Jews, a fear of religion (read: Christianity) playing too large a role in government. Strauss solved the dilemma by embracing a secular religion: patriotism. When you read Kristol and Brooks—both Strauss disciples—writing jointly in the

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Standard, they seem to be making exactly this point about McCain: "McCain would redirect a religiously based moral conservatism into a patriotically grounded moral appeal. When McCain talks about remoralizing America, he talks in terms of reinvigorating patriotism."

It's easy to think that Kristol and Brooks are projecting their Straussianism onto McCain. As Midge Decter, matriarch of the Podhoretz clan, told me, "We decided that we liked McCain, then we came up with our justifications." And McCain, as the apotheosis of the manliness that the *Standard* regularly glorifies, makes an appealing vessel. Kristol has worked with McCain adviser Marshall Wittmann, another Jewish neocon, to cultivate the Arizona maverick. A year ago, Wittmann gave McCain *Standard* articles on "National Greatness Conservatism"—the Kristol-Brooks theory that Republicans should return to the domestic activism and foreign interventionism of Theodore Roosevelt. And Wittmann has regularly worked the *Standard*'s rhetoric into McCain's speeches, including the one dissing Robertson.

REJECTING RELIGIOUS CONSERVATISM may be true to Strauss's views, but it's a break from recent neocon behavior (indeed, some cited the neocon-Christian right rapprochement as evidence that neoconservatism had ceased to exist). In the 1990s, when an evangelical came under liberal attack, nobody rose to his defense faster than a Podhoretz or a Kristol. In 1995, Norman Podhoretz called comparisons of Robertson and Louis Farrakhan "intellectually absurd and morally dangerous." A year earlier, his wife, Decter, excoriated an Anti-Defamation League report that accused Robertson of anti-Semitic tendencies. There were reasons for this stridency. In the neocon mind, the religious right was correct on all the important issues. Evangelicals were wildly pro-Israel (even if sometimes for anti-Semitic reasons), and they shared the neocon disdain for countercultural hedonism.

But, over the past five years, relations between neocons and religious conservatives have frayed. The cold war and the counterculture—the ties that helped obscure their differences—are both gone. Looking back, it's even possible to identify a single seminal moment in the alliance's undoing. In 1996, the journal *First Things* published a symposium called "The End of Democracy?" headlined by Charles Colson, Robert Bork, and Robert P. George. Frustrated by their inability to make any headway against abortion or gay rights, these religious conservative intellectuals threw a tantrum, arguing that the government's immorality may warrant civil disobedience and even revolution. In response, the neocons accused the religious conservatives of anti-Americanism and, worse, unsavvy politics: by scaring off mainstream voters with their overheated rhetoric, the neocons charged, the theocons were dooming the GOP's electoral prospects.

The controversy revealed a gulf not of policy but of sensibility. Religious conservatives, it became clear, were happy to shun modernity. Neocons, on the other hand, still pride themselves on their affinity for jazz and Lionel Trilling—their cosmopolitanism. They understand politics as the terrain of strategy and coalitions, not just of morality. Of course, the neocons recognized their differences from the theocons before. But with theocon language becoming ever shriller—and more electorally detrimental—their friendship became ever more burdensome. One non-Jewish neocon put it this way: "You know the word *mishugas*? One morning you wake up and you find that your good friends are kind of crazy—and, worse, they feel obliged to convert you. It ticks you off."

So Kristol and the neocons now talk about "modernizing the party." They daydream about imposing their National Greatness agenda on the GOP. Yet even they concede that their platform remains extremely vague. Mainly, they seem to be making an argument about tactics: that the party's electoral success hinges on its ability to purge "the most self-caricaturing leaders of the right." Kristol and Brooks write, "You can't win the large groups of swing independents unless you disavow the Robertsons and Falwells." In other words, the McCain-led "battle for the soul of the party" is an excuse to throw the most embarrassing religious conservatives overboard.

Kristol and Brooks call this "creative destruction." But, so far, it's mostly just destruction. Kristol concedes that he has isolated himself from the rest of the party, saying, "Most Republicans don't want to see my face." And mainstream conservatives gloat that neocons will be shut out of jobs and influence in a Bush administration. There are even whispers about a potential alliance between the neocons and the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, though this seems implausible. For his part, Kristol says he hopes to keep the McCain movement alive. Already, there is talk of a new think tank to further hash out the meanings of National Greatness Conservatism and McCain Republicanism. (And Kristol reports registering the website *www.partyofzeus.com*.) Yet the need for such an institution only underscores neoconservatism's lack of a coherent, distinct set of ideas—beyond mere disagreement with the GOP over sensibility and campaign strategy. If, as in Irving Kristol's famous formulation, a neoconservative is a liberal mugged by reality, in Bill Kristol's formulation, a neoconservative is merely a Republican who likes to win. ■

What was Gary Bauer thinking?

Bauer Failure

By RYAN LIZZA

JOHN MCCAIN EXITS the 2000 GOP race much more powerful than he entered it. The same can't be said for Gary Bauer, the Christian-right leader who endorsed McCain on February 16. "I think he has destroyed essentially all of his credibility with his friends," says Michael Farris, a prominent religious conservative who heads the Home School Legal Defense Association and has endorsed George W. Bush. "I don't think there are ten pro-life conservatives who will write him a check today." The day after Bauer's endorsement, Bauer's longtime

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mentor James Dobson, leader of Focus on the Family, called his decision "troubling" and attacked McCain as an unprincipled, pro-gay womanizer with a violent temper. Says Farris, "Gary burned the biggest bridge in his professional life."

Indeed, to many pundits and conservative activists, Bauer's endorsement remains one of the mysteries of the campaign. "I really don't have any explanation for it," says Phyllis Schlafly, matriarch of the old religious right. But Bauer's decision actually contained a rather intriguing logic. It's not just that other Christian-right heavyweights had already signed up with Bush, leaving Bauer little hope of influence in the Texan's campaign. Bauer also realized that if McCain were ever to cobble together a new Republican majority, he would need a chunk of the Christian right. And, in McCain's critique of the GOP establishment, Bauer saw echoes of his own critique of the religious-right establishment. For now, of course, it's all gone down in flames. But, in the long term, Bauer's vision of a reform wing of the religious right isn't as crazy as it sounds.

ROB BABBONI

Bauer's fight with the Christian right, like McCain's fight with the party more generally, began as essentially personal. The animosity between Bauer and Ralph Reed is well-established. In 1995, Bauer excoriated Reed for cozying up to pro-choice Colin Powell. In 1996, he lashed out against Reed and others at the Republican convention over abortion. "Ralph was upstairs with the Bush people," says one former Bauer aide. "Gary basically characterized him as a pragmatic sellout, and from that point on [their relationship] became pretty intensely negative."

But, over the past couple of years, Bauer's rivalry with Reed and Pat Robertson—two sons of the Southern upper middle class deeply at ease with the GOP's libertarian economic agenda—has become ideological as well. In 1997 and 1998, Bauer almost single-handedly dragged the religious right into the debate over human rights and trade with China. His fight against most-favored-nation trading status drew fire from Robertson, a Yalie who has had investments in China. Robertson dismissively compared Bauer to Ralph Nader and described the two as "China bashers" with "a dangerous appearance of morality."

Like McCain, Bauer increasingly talks in populist, class-tinged terms. He frequently refers to his humble roots as the son of an alcoholic janitor. He rejects Social Security privatization and supports the Earned Income Tax Credit. He champions a ban on soft money because he thinks it will weaken big-business lobbies. "The marketplace is wonderful, and it's better than government by and large, but it's not God," says Bauer. A Bauer aide adds, "It's why Gary can have more in common with liberals, because liberals believe that the government has a role."

To some on the right, Bauer's economic heresies had made him suspect even before he endorsed McCain. "The more I saw the Bauer campaign," says Farris, "the more I thought, Is this guy a Republican? It floored me that he was embracing some of the presuppositions of the Democrats." Such sniping, suggests a Bauer aide, is "all part of the process of moving out of the box of being a conservative activist.... [Bauer] has made a calculation to do something a bit broader, and sometimes you ruffle some feathers." Like McCain, Bauer found himself in a self-perpetuating cycle where his ideological disagreements compounded his personal estrangement, thereby freeing him ideologically all the more.

It's hard to remember in the wake of McCain's attack on Jerry Falwell and Robertson in Virginia Beach, but, coming off his huge win in New Hampshire, it wasn't a foregone conclusion that religious conservatives would scorn the Arizona senator. The New Hampshire primary had turned into a fight over Bush's big, upper-income-skewed tax cut and McCain's call to save Social Security. And Bauer may have thought the McCain line held some Christian conservative appeal. While evangelicals are better off than the media's Bible-thumping caricature of them suggests, their median income is still below that of the general public. There is a class divide within the religious right, and Bauer hoped that if he hitched his populist social conservatism to McCain's, the Arizonan might win some working-class evangelicals and Catholics. Indeed, the day after McCain's Virginia Beach speech, Bauer was dispatched to Catholic-rich Ohio to campaign.

Bauer also realized that while the leadership of the Christian Coalition hates McCain because of his support for campaign finance reform, there is no evidence that it's anathema to grassroots conservatives. When asked whether campaign finance reform is a priority, white evangelical Protestants answer no differently than the population at large. Bauer even insists there was some little-noticed movement toward McCain among these voters. And, in South Carolina, McCain actually did better among religious conservatives

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than among economic conservatives.

Of course, it's all theoretical now. Whatever chance McCain had to add Christian conservatives to his camp disappeared after his speech on February 28 attacking Robertson and Falwell. "It was a tremendous opportunity," says Bauer, "and they completely blew it." Bauer says he saw the speech only a half hour before it was delivered and that he convinced McCain to add a section praising Dobson and Chuck Colson, the former Watergate felon turned prison evangelist. But, to many Christian conservative voters, the fact that Bauer read and revised the speech made him look even worse. Bauer assured reporters that day that "if this were an attack on Christian conservatives, I wouldn't be here." But two days later, after Dobson issued a detailed three-page rebuke of McCain, Bauer retreated, condemning the speech as an "unwarranted, ill-advised, and divisive attack on certain religious leaders." And he stopped campaigning for the Arizona senator. When asked before Super Tuesday if he would campaign for McCain again if the senator did surprisingly well, Bauer paused before saying, "Umm, you know, I think I'd rather not get specific about what my future plans are." A top Bush adviser says gleefully, "I hope and expect that Gary will be supporting us very soon."

McCain leaves the GOP race the least popular Republican among Christian conservatives since New Jersey Governor Christie Whitman. But his critiques of the GOP leadership—on campaign finance reform and on payoffs to the rich—are stronger at the end of the 2000 campaign than they were at its beginning. And, contrary to conventional wisdom, those ideas—if not their messenger—hold considerable appeal on the religious right. It's quite possible that a prominent religious conservative will one day pick up McCain's reform mantle and succeed in dividing the religious right along class lines in just the way Gary Bauer hoped. In fact, there's already such a candidate in the 2000 race. His name is Pat Buchanan. ■

Campaign Journal

More Like Us

By MICHELLE COTTLE

VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI

I KNEW I was in for a treat when I saw the cannon near the hotel swimming pool. A small plaque said it was of Civil War vintage—much like the cannons lining the driveway and the cannon standing in the middle of the makeshift miniature golf course. The plaque urged hotel guests to put an ear to the muzzle and "listen" to the relic's tales of past woe; the final line of text lamented, "Wiser and without trust, our cannon remains pointed North."

Welcome to Vicksburg. Tucked into a cozy bend of the river, this small Mississippi Delta town stands as a monument to the Old South. Visitors hoping to learn a little something about local history can check out the Gray and Blue Naval Museum (featuring the world's largest collection of Civil War gunboat models), *The Vanishing Glory* (a half-hour movie depicting the siege of Vicksburg by Union troops in 1863), and, of course, the town's massive military park, which offers a 16-mile driving tour past memorials to fallen soldiers. Even visitors uninterested in the area's Confederate past will find it hard to ignore, as Civil War monuments are scattered everywhere—along roadsides, even in the parking lot of Blockbuster Video.

As the presidential combatants jetted frantically between California and New York in the run-up to the March 7 Super Tuesday primaries, the residents of Vicksburg were quietly gearing up for March 14, when they'll join voters around the state—as well as fellow Southerners from Florida, Louisiana, Tennessee, and Texas—in casting their primary votes. On the off chance that John McCain's insurgent candidacy wasn't put down on March 7, the folks here were preparing to deliver the fatal blow in the GOP's civil war. The maverick senator's denunciations of the Christian right had not played well below the Mason-Dixon line, nor had his reform message generated much excitement. After all, people here remember that the last time a crusading outsider marched through these parts, his troops burned much of the region to the ground.

IN THE INTEREST of full disclosure, the reader should know that I am a child of the South, reared mostly in Alabama and Tennessee; my parents lived in Vicksburg during my college years. As such, I find many of the region's customs soothing (such as the unofficial ban on wearing white shoes before Easter). But I have never been particularly comfortable with the area's religiosity. When people in the South ask, "What are you?" they aren't interested in what you do for a living. When I was growing up, my friends and relatives spoke of the "unsaved" in the hushed tones normally reserved for the insane and the incarcerated. Thus, more than a decade after I, shall we say, reevaluated my Southern Baptist upbringing, it was with some apprehension that last Sunday I found myself headed for morning services at Bowmar Avenue Baptist Church.

As small-town Southern churches go, Bowmar is unremarkable, with a congregation both decidedly middle-class and aggressively monochromatic. In recent weeks, the folks at Bowmar—like much of the rest of the nation—had been paying close attention to the brouhaha over W.'s now-infamous visit to Bob Jones University and McCain's subsequent slap at Christian-right icons Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson. But, while much of the media cheered McCain's courage and wrung their hands over W.'s kowtowing to the right, this little political drama had quite a different effect on the folks at Bowmar.

"I will *not* vote for McCain *specifically* because of his stand on this," asserted Charlotte Valentine, the model of an aging belle in her dark teal dress and perfectly applied makeup. A retired teacher and Vicksburg native, Valentine said she suspected McCain hadn't really meant all those awful things he said about Falwell and Robertson and Bob

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Jones. "But it scares me," she added—particularly his comparison of religious conservatives to Al Sharpton and Louis Farrakhan. "To me, ultraconservative Christians are not anywhere close to those ultraextreme people out there who are so dangerous," she said, a slight edge coloring her dulcet drawl. "How can Christians be dangerous to this country?"

For the past couple of years, the chattering classes have argued about whether the religious right is in decline. Indeed, McCain was probably thinking of the Christian Coalition's fading glory when he took a swipe at Robertson, its leader. But at Bowmar—and churches like it throughout the South—people don't much care if the Christian Coalition is in or out of power in Washington. Despite what Ralph Reed might like us to think, the legions of conservative Christian Southerners who will vote this week do not sit around with a checklist of policy positions. The good people of Bowmar Baptist were less interested in which candidate appealed to them ideologically than in which one appealed to them culturally—which one seemed sympathetic to, as one woman put it, "the way things are down here." No one could tell me which of George W.'s issues they particularly liked, but everyone praised how family-oriented the governor is. McCain, by contrast, seemed a little uncouth, a little difficult, a little alien. In Washington, the Christian right may look like just another legislative lobby. But in Vicksburg it is a way of life. And George W. Bush, for reasons the pundits tend not to think much about, just seems to fit in.

In Charlotte Valentine's adult Sunday-school class, McCain, George W., and Bob Jones had been the hot topic of conversation. "We were talking about Christians being persecuted for standing up for what's right," recounted Shirley Cook, another member of the class. "It was wrong for everyone to jump on the people at Bob Jones," she said with a firm bob of her gray head. Granted, the school may be a little extreme, agreed Valentine, "but you have to have limits." As for the university's anti-Catholicism, Valentine explained that "we Baptists don't believe in the ecumenical movement. The Bible doesn't allow us to be very broad-minded. People accuse us of being narrow-minded, and really we are. The Bible says, 'Broad is the way to perdition, and narrow is the way to heaven.'"

As it happened, Cook, Valentine, and others in the congregation saw nothing much wrong with Bob Jones's ban on interracial dating. Cook, in fact, brought up the same concerns about an Antichrist-led world government that the school used to justify its policy. "You *know* it's going to be interracial," she said worriedly, in a low, conspiratorial tone. "And we *know* it's coming to pass." But even many of those who disagreed with Bob Jones's policies felt led to defend Bush. When McCain lashed out at George W. for speaking at the university, "it caused a lot of folks around here to say, 'You go, guy!'" in visceral support of the governor, said Bowmar congregant Mari Taylor, who blamed a media corps that's "not from around here" for stirring up trouble. Indeed, many folks in Vicksburg haven't a clue what Robertson or Falwell are up to these days, but they nonetheless circled the wagons (with Bush snugly ensconced in the center) the moment they perceived their culture and religion to be under attack. McCain's effort to criticize specific Christian leaders while appealing to the rank and file didn't stand a chance.

The details of McCain's arguments were overshadowed by the fact that many Southerners simply feel that public squabbling about religion is, well, unseemly, and they blame the senator for opening this Pandora's box. The candidates "have brought things to the front that should never have been touched," wailed one ancient and frighteningly frail Bowmar congregant, who got so agitated thinking about the uproar caused by "that man with the white hair" that she had to excuse herself and leave the sanctuary before I could get her name. "I really think McCain ripped his britches on this issue," agreed Finis Cowan, a longtime Texan vacationing with his wife, Julie, at a local inn where I had dinner. The Cowans, coincidentally, are precisely the type of people McCain was trying to impress: Catholics who have never been big Bush fans. "We've never gotten a real fix on him," said Julie, noting that the governor of Texas doesn't really do much. Still, McCain's ruckus over Bob Jones and his swipe at the religious right "suggest a character defect," said Finis. "It was intemperate, and for the first time I understand why the other senators dislike him."

Even before taking on the religious right, McCain was having trouble winning the heart of the South. For one thing, George W. has what Taylor called "the family thing" going for him. In Dixie, this has little to do with the fact that W.'s daddy was once president (although Valentine, who fears that W. "isn't a particularly smart man," did suggest that "maybe he could give his father a Cabinet position"). It's not Bush's political pedigree that matters as much as the perception that he's a true family man (unlike that rogue Clinton). "That's a really big thing down here," said Taylor, who has been especially impressed by the governor's "dedication to being with his wife." Many a Vicksburg voter explained to me how marvelous it was that W. seems to share the Southern emphasis on family. Thus, when George W. raves about his mama or Poppy hits the campaign trail for his boy, it is seen as a testament to the closeness of the Bush clan—rather than (as it may have been viewed in New Hampshire) as evidence that George W. has ridden his daddy's coattails to success.

In fact, Bush's background and family carry considerably more weight in Vicksburg than his policy plans and promises. "Politics really bores me," admitted Valentine. "I listen enough to where I have a general idea of where a candidate stands and what his moral position is, then I tune the rest of it out." Similarly, when asked whether George W. was sufficiently interested in conservative issues like abortion or school prayer, Shirley Cook gave me a blank, uncomprehending stare. Then, after a long pause, she breathed, "Oh, I think he'll be conservative enough to be a good president." Cook knew that W. considered family important, she knew he stood up for conservative Christians, and she knew he was a born-again believer. The policy details would work themselves out.

Southerners also see Bush as one of their own because of simple geography. Sure, his daddy and granddaddy were Yankees and most of his schooling took place at the elitest of

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elite New England institutions, but W. has spent enough time in the Lone Star State to understand the ways of the South, said Taylor (and many others). Moreover, to the ears of a Southerner—especially a Southerner desperate for a like-minded champion in the fight against the venality of Clinton-Gore—W.'s emphasis on family, his discussions of his personal faith, his new willingness to defend religious conservatives, and all that talk about what's in his heart really do make him sound like "one of us." (Not to mention that unspeakably irritating twang—which is not, I assure you, an inevitable by-product of Southern living.)

You'd think the fact that McCain's family once owned a plantation just up the road in Carroll County might make the locals think of him, too, as one of them. ("Of *course* it's a big deal that he had family here," one belle assured me. "My granddaddy might have known his granddaddy.") But many of those initially inclined to grant McCain good-old-boy status were repelled by this recent "political stunt." Geography alone cannot make up for the senator's display of very un-Southern behavior—just as W.'s years up North can be excused in light of his perceived cultural affinity for the ways of the South. To a large extent, Southern is a state of mind. And, in this state, George W. Bush is the favorite son. ■

Why McCain helps Gore.

After Math

By JOHN B. JUDIS

SO IT HAS come to this. After numerous twists and turns—the Bradley boomlet! the McCain mutiny!—the presidential field is back to the two men everyone assumed would be the nominees at the very beginning. But if the primary season didn't change the makeup of the race, it certainly changed its dynamics. To be sure, crazy things could happen over the next eight months—from a stock-market crash to a new White House scandal—but, barring these, Al Gore, a candidate all but written off several months ago, looks like the heavy favorite to win. He is tied to a popular president who has presided over an economic boom. What's more, in George W. Bush he faces a man who looks much weaker than he did mere months ago. In last September's NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll, Bush led Gore 52 percent to 35 percent; in a poll earlier this month, the two were in a dead heat.

And Bush is in worse shape than the national polls suggest. Elections are not determined by the sum of individual ballots but by states' electoral votes and the movement of large regional voting blocs out of one party column and into the other. That's how the Republican lock on the electoral college was created—and that's how it was broken. Southern whites and Northern Catholics (later dubbed "Reagan Democrats") began moving out of the Democratic Party during the 1960s. Initially, many backed George Wallace's segregationist third-party candidacy—in 1968, Wallace won not only the Deep South but more than ten percent of the vote in Michigan, Ohio, and Missouri. But, after Wallace, these Southern and Midwestern states became dependably Republican in presidential elections. Taken together with the GOP's existing base in the Rocky Mountain and prairie states, they gave the Republicans of the 1980s 257 electoral votes out of the 270 needed to win. Neither Ronald Reagan nor George Bush even needed to capture California to win the presidency.

Since 1988, however, this Republican presidential majority has disintegrated. The economic downturn of the late '80s and Bill Clinton's New Democrat politics brought many Reagan Democrats back into the fold. In addition, a new force emerged that was comparable in its role, though not in its political outlook, to the Wallace movement of the '60s. While Reagan's campaign in 1980 attracted Wallace voters, it alienated the fiscally conservative, socially liberal Republicans and independents who had for decades sustained the party in the Northeast, upper Midwest, and Pacific coast. In 1980, many of these voters went for former Republican John Anderson, who got seven percent of the vote as a third-party candidate. And, like Wallace, Anderson was a stopping point in a migration from one party to another. Of the 17 states in which Anderson won more than seven percent in 1980, 15 went for Clinton in the '90s.

In 1992, this growing bloc of independents split their vote between Clinton and Ross Perot, who played a role similar to that of Wallace. His 19 percent represented the collapse of the Republican majority and the promise of a Democratic one. While Clinton's percentage of the vote in 1992 was only three percent less than Michael Dukakis's in 1988, the Republican total fell 16 percent. Then, in 1996, most of these independent voters abandoned Perot and backed Clinton. They provided the Democrats with the same secure base in presidential elections the Republicans had enjoyed in the '80s. If you count the states that gave Clinton more than 50 percent of the vote in 1992 and 1996 (omitting Arkansas, Louisiana, and Tennessee, which went for Clinton and Gore partly out of regional loyalty), you get a solid Democratic base of 246 electoral votes—one that stretches from the Northeast through the Midwest to the Pacific.

TODAY, AT LEAST, that electoral base looks as solid for the Democrats as the Southern-Midwestern Wallace base was for the Republicans. Even now, before the general election has begun, key states are firmly in Gore's corner. In a February 24–25 *Time*/CNN poll, Gore led Bush by 13 percent in California; and, in a February 22–28 Quinnipiac College poll, he led by 17 percent in New York. If Gore can hold the Democratic base of the '90s, he need merely gather 29 more electoral votes from Tennessee (11), Louisiana (9), Oregon (7), Pennsylvania (23), Ohio (21), Nevada (4), Missouri (11), Arkansas (6), Kentucky (8), and New Mexico (5). And that shouldn't be too hard: all those states backed Clinton in the last two elections.

Is there any way for Bush to overcome Gore's electoral advantage? Yes, but it won't be easy. To defeat Gore, Bush must win back Reagan Democrats in the Midwest and a share of the Anderson-Perot independents without losing

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ground to Gore in marginal Republican states like North Carolina and Colorado. It would be a difficult task for any candidate, but it's harder because of Bush's primary campaign against McCain. Last year, Bush and his advisers assumed the Texas governor's principal Republican opponent would be right-wing publisher Steve Forbes. They hoped to defeat Forbes by appealing to moderate Republicans and independents while using Pat Robertson and Ralph Reed to neutralize Forbes's appeal to the religious right. Michigan Governor John Engler actually believed his state's open primary would benefit Bush against Forbes.

But McCain's maverick candidacy undermined Bush's strategy. To defeat McCain, Bush had to present himself as the real Republican and the champion of the religious right. Having previously denounced Forbes's flat tax and the Republican House tax bill for their indifference to the poor, Bush now advanced a huge, regressive tax cut of his own. He courted the denizens of Bob Jones University and had his allies attack McCain as soft on abortion. He denounced McCain's plan for campaign finance reform. All in all, Bush thoroughly jeopardized his standing among both Reagan Democrats, many of whom are Catholic and happy with Clinton's economic policies, and independents, who are committed to some kind of political reform. Bush is now frantically trying to move back to the middle, but he will find that hard to do. Not only will the Gore campaign continually remind voters of Bush's transgressions, but Pat Buchanan, if he is the Reform Party nominee, will be there to lure away conservative voters whom Bush might alienate in trying to reestablish his compassion and moderation.

AP

GORE, ON THE other hand, has emerged from his primary fight with Bill Bradley in good shape for the fall. Except for his pandering to Al Sharpton and his gays-in-the-military litmus test for the Joint Chiefs, he's done little that Bush can use against him. To be sure, Bush will try to remind independents of Gore's role in the administration's political scandals, but, after having run a scurrilous campaign against McCain, the Texas governor will have a hard time passing himself off as an advocate of good government. Meanwhile, Gore will have many opportunities to drive a wedge between Bush and swing voters—from Bush's opposition to abortion rights and gun control to his dismal record on curbing air pollution.

What's more, after some initial stumbles, Gore appears to be hitting his stride—and he has begun incorporating the most appealing aspects of McCain's and Bradley's campaigns into his own. In a March 5 speech at New York's 92nd Street Y, Gore, speaking without a text, synthesized his programs on education, health care, the environment, and gun control with McCain's and Bradley's commitment to campaign finance reform in a way that will likely appeal to independents this fall. Without campaign finance reform, Gore warned, these substantive programs would be blocked by the same "special interests" that funded Bush's commercials against McCain. "The basic question is, Who can dance on the head of a pin to satisfy the special interests or who can fight for the public interest?" Gore said. "That is the issue. The same kind of campaign that could accept a flood of special interest money will lead to an administration that acts on behalf of these special interests."

Campaigns like to suggest comparisons with past elections. When Bush was riding high in the polls, his campaign manager, Karl Rove, predicted that the coming election would resemble 1896, when William McKinley crafted a new Republican majority in opposition to Democratic populism. Bush, of course, was to be the McKinley of 2000. Sadly for Bush and Rove, this year looks more like the status quo election of 1988, when the vice president of a popular administration, whose policies and whose party the public was not yet ready to repudiate, routed a seemingly successful governor. In this comparison, Gore gets to play the elder Bush, and Bush becomes Michael Dukakis.

And what of McCain, whose noble crusade flamed out over California and Ohio? Smart Republicans hope his candidacy will do for their party what Gary Hart's did for the Democrats in 1984: set the stage for an internal realignment. They may be right, but it won't happen by fall. Right now, McCain's candidacy looks like a continuation of the Anderson and Perot defections. He probably won't leave the GOP himself, but many of his followers will. In the Virginia primary, 42 percent of McCain voters told exit pollsters they would vote for Gore in November. Gore and the Democrats, not Bush and the Republicans, will be the immediate beneficiaries of his crusade. And that will prove the primary season's most significant development. ■

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How to love your HMO.

Managing Fine

By GREGG EASTERBROOK

MANAGED CARE COMPANIES work hard to be despised, and they're succeeding. They've offended the public, lost its trust, and recently landed themselves in the Supreme Court. In February, the justices heard the case of Cindy Herdrich, who went to her HMO complaining of abdominal pain. The examining physician found hints of an inflamed appendix. Yet, instead of sending Herdrich for an immediate, full-price ultrasound at the local hospital, the doctor told her to wait eight days—until an appointment became available at an ultrasound facility that offered the HMO a discount. During the wait Herdrich's appendix ruptured, threatening her life. She's already sued the doctor for negligence and won. Now, in her Supreme Court case, Herdrich is arguing that because her HMO gave end-of-the-year bonuses to physicians who held costs down, it violated its fiduciary responsibility to put patients first. Since almost all health insurers now reward cost containment, Herdrich's case could turn managed care upside down, if not outlaw it altogether.

The industry isn't any more popular in the other branches of government. This month the House and Senate will try to hammer out a compromise version of patients' rights legislation, whose main purpose is to make it easier to sue HMOs. (Some anti-HMO suits are currently barred by a quirk of the law.) Managed care reform also occupies a prominent place in Al Gore's presidential campaign: recently the vice president has berated Aetna U.S. Healthcare for denying home care to a disabled six-month-old boy in Washington state. Even George W. Bush has begun bragging about a Texas patients' rights law passed on his watch, though he neglects to mention that he opposed it at the time.

What makes the assault on managed care so peculiar is that Americans are healthier than ever. It's one thing for the public to loathe an industry whose performance is declining, but the health care business is losing stature at a time when its performance is *improving*. By almost all measures, U.S. public health gets better every year. Americans are living longer than ever before, and heart disease, stroke, hypertension, AIDS, and most forms of cancer are steadily declining. Almost every U.S. health trend has been positive during the decade of managed care. And, after rising at a frightening pace for most of the 1980s, the cost of health care has stabilized. There are still serious problems with the system—chiefly that 43 million Americans, a staggering 16 percent of the population, have no health insurance. But bashing managed care, as has become so fashionable, doesn't solve that problem. It just distracts us from it.

THE HEADQUARTERS OF Aetna U.S. Healthcare, the nation's largest managed care firm, sits in a suburban office park in Blue Bell, Pennsylvania, near Philadelphia. Inside the complex, company analysts dictate what medical procedures will or will not be paid for, computers scan records to determine which doctors are holding down costs and which are spending freely, and nurse practitioners line the phone banks that patients and doctors must call to authorize treatment. Aetna controls medical care for about 21 million people; about 300,000 physicians, more than a third of the country's doctors, participate in its plans.

This market power makes Aetna remarkably similar to the "regional alliances" that formed the centerpiece of Bill and Hillary Clinton's 1993 health care plan. Under Hillarycare, a few large regional insurance alliances would have used their clout to negotiate discounts with doctors and hospitals. This is exactly what Aetna and all other major managed care firms now do. Over the past five years, the nation's 18 largest for-profit plans have evolved into six—Aetna, United Healthcare, Cigna, Foundation Health Systems, Pacificare, and Wellpoint Health Networks; and, at this writing, Aetna and Wellpoint were talking about a merger. In about half of all states, the five biggest managed care firms now account for at least 50 percent of patients; in 16 states, they account for more than 70 percent. As a result, the vast majority of physicians and clinics, not to mention almost all hospitals, must accept managed care to stay in business. About 125 million Americans belong to HMOs or similar plans—roughly three-quarters of the non-Medicare population, with the proportion steadily rising. In effect, Clinton's "regional alliance" plan passed—but through the free market rather than through Congress.

And, at least when it comes to cost control, the plan is working. In 1993, health care consumed 13.7 percent of the nation's GDP, and the rate was shooting upward; many projected it would hit 15 or even 18 percent by the year 2000. By 1998, the most recent year for which statistics are available, spending was down to 13.5 percent of GDP. Because runaway medical inflation is a story that *didn't* happen, the accomplishment has been overlooked. But that does not diminish its significance. If health care expenditures had risen as expected, today this issue would dominate domestic politics. Middle-class Americans would face ruinous increases in insurance premiums, and voters would be livid. Instead, against the best predictions, health care inflation has cooled. Managed care deserves the credit.

Indeed, little-noticed in the coverage of Herdrich's case

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was the Clinton administration's decision to file a friend-of-the-court brief opposing her position. The White House may bash opponents of the patients' bill of rights legislation before Congress, but it continues to advance the theory of managed care. In one of his final domestic policy initiatives, Clinton recently proposed that Medicare be allowed to steer senior citizens to physicians and hospitals that offer low fees, just as managed care companies like Aetna do. The administration realizes that if Herdrich wins her Supreme Court case, managed care could go down in flames, taking medical cost control along with it—and we'd suddenly be back to a health care "crisis."

BUT AREN'T MANAGED CARE'S cost-control methods excessive? Not necessarily. Many HMOs control costs through "capitation," or paying a fixed amount per year per patient. Physicians endlessly complain that this means they lose money on really sick patients; they rarely add that it also means they come out ahead on healthy customers. All managed care plans negotiate discounts, mainly through "preferred provider organizations" or "independent practice associations" in which patients are steered to physicians or hospitals that agree to lower their rates. Under such pressure, the prevailing obstetrician's fee for prenatal care and normal delivery of a baby in Washington, D.C., to cite one example, has fallen from about $3,000 in 1993 to about $800 today. While few doctors or hospital administrators are happy about the pressure to discount, discounting has hardly made medicine unrewarding. The income of the average U.S. physician has fallen five percent in real-dollar terms since 1993, but, at $164,000 annually, it remains the highest average physician salary in the world.

To be sure, managed care sometimes imposes maddening precertification requirements—maddening to doctors as well as to patients, since, essentially, the new system automatically questions their judgment. Then there is "utilization review"—insurance companies mine files to see whether particular doctors are ordering unneeded tests, allowing patients to spend too many nights in the hospital, or prescribing proprietary drugs when generic would do. "Case managers," usually nurses, may recommend cost-cutting ideas to the physicians of seriously ill patients who are running up big bills. Finally, managed care firms sometimes reduce costs by brute force—simply refusing to pay some or all of what physicians and hospitals charge and causing financial disaster for patients who assumed their bills would be covered. (The law on this point is elaborate, but health insurers are not always obligated to pay.)

Some managed care techniques are clearly designed to baffle patients and physicians in the hope they will give up and go away. The section of Aetna's website that lists information patients must know to comply with company rules is 60 printed pages long. And the red tape creates inequality: white-collar professionals accustomed to reading fine print can usually pressure their managed care firms to pay for whatever they need, while the less educated are more likely to give up in frustration. These represent real problems, but they don't explain why so many Americans consider managed care a failure.

Working on this article, I spent weeks negotiating with Aetna for permission to enter its Pennsylvania stronghold and interview the people who set its claim-approval policies and answer its preapproval phone lines. Arranging interviews at Aetna, it turns out, is harder than arranging them at the Pentagon. The company kept scheduling interviews and later canceling them, then finally declared that its officials and preapproval personnel were just so incredibly, astonishingly busy—every single one of them—that no meeting was possible. Aetna, which has a horrible public image, seemed determined to convince me that it deserved it. In this it reflects the managed care industry in general, which has compiled the most spectacular record of negative public relations since the nuclear power industry of the 1970s.

The shame is that if managed care companies were less creepy, they could make a compelling case that their existence serves the public good. HMOs are not some marketing gimmick; they arose as a rational response to the faults of the old pass-along system, in which physicians passed along unlimited invoices and insurers passed along unlimited inflation. Patients may suffer when a test or procedure is not immediately approved, but they can also be harmed by overtreatment—which the old system encouraged by paying doctors and hospitals to run up the bill. It's not necessarily bad to have case managers watching over a doctor's shoulder; they may point out something the doctor has missed. And some aspects of the new order actually make things easier for patients. In many managed care plans, you never have to fill out forms or front the cash before filing for reimbursement; you just flash your card—a convenience previously known only in national health systems.

ADVANTAGES LIKE THESE are rarely discussed, because we have become convinced that what Cindy Herdrich experienced is now the norm—that managed care is responsible mainly for medical horrors. Yet, if that were really the case, public health would be getting worse. Instead, Harry Rosenberg, chief of mortality data for the National Center for Health Statistics, called 1999 "a banner year" for U.S. public health. A new study by economists Kevin Murphy and Robert Topel of the University of Chicago estimates the annual value of the ever-higher U.S. life expectancy at about $2.8 trillion, more than twice what the nation spends on health care. That people are living longer, more productive lives while losing less time to illness and pain, Murphy and Topel suppose, is one reason the economy is so robust.

Nor have studies found any association between managed care and those health care problems that persist. Robert Brook, Elizabeth McGlynn, and Mark Schuster, three physicians who specialize in care-quality data, recently completed an extensive study for the RAND Corporation. They concluded that for overall health outcomes, there is no difference between managed care and traditional fee-for-service programs. (Problems like inequity in service between affluent and poor communities, they found, predate managed care.) Most other studies also conclude that man-

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aged care has not harmed patient health, though some analysts find that patients do better in nonprofit managed care than in for-profit plans.

Many people assumed managed care would stunt the development of more effective or more humane treatments by driving all medical services toward whatever is cheapest. That has not happened; expensive procedures continue to proliferate. Two decades ago, for example, artificial joints were a rarity; now almost all insurers pay for hip-replacement surgery. Heart bypass surgery is much more frequent than it was a decade ago—extending life, with vigor, even for those who have the operation in their seventies. Traumatic invasive procedures have been replaced by laparoscopic surgeries, done routinely on an outpatient basis with short recovery times. Not that long ago, a middle-aged adult experiencing chronic knee pain would have been informed that joints begin to ache with age, given ibuprofen, and told to live with it. Today, anything from laparoscopic surgery to an artificial knee is likely to be approved by almost any managed care plan, with the result that the pain is removed.

And, stereotypes aside, waiting is rarely a problem under the new system. The reason Herdrich's case drew so much attention is because what happened to her is so unusual; even with cost containment, patients rarely queue. Today, in Canada's national health system, there is a median wait of six weeks to consult a specialist for nonemergency conditions and a median wait of eleven weeks for a nonemergency MRI. Figures for many Western European national health systems are similar. In the United States, waits of more than a few days for nonemergency tests or therapy are almost nonexistent, because—even under managed care—American medicine has far more hospital beds, specialists, and high-tech equipment per capita than national health systems do. Managed care has pressured the specialists and the owners of fancy medical machines to cut prices, but it has not put them out of business. Unless you're one of the uninsured, this is a best-case result.

Health has improved at the same time as costs have declined because managed care has forced doctors and hospitals to become more efficient; they may not enjoy this experience, but their increased efficiency serves society. Though many predicted managed care would cause health care rationing, for the insured, at least, there is zero evidence of it. Stories of HMOs denying a class of treatment almost always involve experimental procedures of questionable merit, such as bone-marrow transplants to treat breast cancer, which new studies suggest are worthless. Extremely expensive but proven procedures, such as bypass surgery and organ transplants, are routinely paid for by managed care, not rationed. Kafkaesque nightmares do occur under managed care, but, contrary to conventional wisdom, they are kinks in a basically successful system.

Working out the kinks remains important. But the stampede toward more anti-HMO lawsuits may not be the best course. As often happens in politics, the debate runs behind developments in the field. Responding to patient dismay, several large managed care organizations—including United Healthcare, the number-two insurer nationally, and many of the Blue Shield plans—have recently eliminated most precertification requirements and now allow patients to go directly to specialists without the approval of a "gatekeeper." Assuming United Healthcare's approach proves popular, firms like Aetna will have to either match it or lose business.

Moreover, denied claims appear to be less of a problem now than they were in the early '90s, when the managed care industry was first figuring itself out. Although it took until 2000 for Herdrich's case to reach the Supreme Court, her mistreatment occurred in 1991. Since that time, fears of liability under existing law, predating a congressional patients' bill of rights, have changed the managed care landscape. In 1993, a California HMO lost an $89 million judgment to the estate of a women named Nelene Fox, who had been denied needed treatment. This and other decisions shook the industry, making the big carriers look more favorably on treatment requests, especially with juries inclined to believe the worst about HMOs.

While a national patients' bill of rights would increase pressure on managed care firms to act responsibly, it would also generate litigation costs—which would mean higher premiums. The ideal middle ground might be independent arbitration panels that resolve patients' grievances against managed care without decade-long litigation. Unfortunately, in the current HMO-bashing climate, there seems to be more interest in headline-grabbing than in hashing out middle-ground solutions.

None of this is to imply that America's health care system is, by any stretch, morally acceptable. In no other Western nation does a larger percentage of the population lack health insurance. Just as managed care is a logical outcome of market forces, so are the uninsured. Insurers have no free-market incentive to seek out customers who have trouble paying their premiums or who suffer from "preexisting" conditions. Employers trying to cut back health benefits are only acting logically, given the way the rules are currently written. The market controls costs, and it pursues quality of care much more effectively than most commentators acknowledge. But the free market will never look after everyone. That is not its incentive structure.

Insuring that everyone is cared for is the natural role of government. Perhaps that means helping people buy into the federal employees' health care system, as Bill Bradley proposes. Perhaps it means creating new health-coverage tax credits and allowing younger people to buy into Medicare, as Al Gore suggests. Perhaps it means finding some other hybrid between efficient free-enterprise medicine and protection for those who falter in the market. Any solution will cost money, though some of the funds will be recovered through better health and higher productivity among those now uninsured. But the good news is that such money is available, in part because managed care helped save it.

Managed care proves that extensive reform of the medical system, often deemed impossible, can actually happen quickly and with success. Now it's time to apply that knowledge to America's one true health care crisis: the lack of universal care. ■

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Easygoing And Otherwise

THE WORD "MEANDER," says the *OED*, was originally the name of a river in Phrygia noted for its winding course. Floating down that river comes **Wonder Boys** (Paramount), following all its twists with a blend of obedience and curiosity. Steve Kloves's screenplay, from a Michael Chabon novel, has the sort of story that is game for anything. Does the current want to turn to the right? Fine. To the right again? Or to the left? Or circle gently for a bit? Fear not; the story will follow the current's whim.

The only iron rule in this screenplay is its determination not to salute dramatic form. None of the usual elements for *Wonder Boys*, thank you. No premise, development, and climax here—at least, not in any orthodox way. No clarified and deepened theme. Just some (moderately) interesting events happening to some (moderately) interesting people. As a matter of fact, this procedure is pleasant; drama doesn't bore when it's good, but this is an ingratiating snap of the fingers.

Michael Douglas plays a professor of creative writing in a Pittsburgh college, and, first off, it's unexpectedly heartwarming to see that Douglas, son of a still-active star, has already reached the point where he can play a middle-aging fud, a mild eccentric who wears funny hats and odd-lot clothes and already has a wealth of disappointments at his beck for rueful comfort. This man is a novelist who published his last book seven years ago and has been typing along ever since, now on page 2661 of a new novel, just because he doesn't dare to stop—though, like the film he is in, the book is just meandering.

The professor is having an affair with the college chancellor (Frances McDormand) whose husband is the chair of the English department and thus the professor's boss. The chancellor tells the professor she is pregnant, just as his third wife, for unrelated reasons, leaves him. Simultaneously, the college holds its annual Wordfest, a conference attended by authors and publishers to celebrate the cause of literature and to advance writing careers. Douglas's editor (Robert Downey Jr.), still awaiting the next novel, arrives at the conference with his transvestite boyfriend. And, at about the same time, Douglas also becomes convinced that the most saturnine student in his writing class (Tobey Maguire), disliked by his fellow students, is the only one with genuine talent. Wordfest might do the student some good. Editor Downey sniffs the air.

I am omitting a lot of other elements. (Well, here's one other. The English chairperson is a pop culture addict whose house has a vault in which he keeps the jacket that Marilyn Monroe wore on the day she married Joe DiMaggio, along with one of Joe's gloves.) All these matters could be elements of a pinwheel farce or a poignant comedy, but *Wonder Boys* is too busy staying free-form to become either. Collisions and collusions happen, most of which are amusing, some of them moving, some a bit worrisome. (Marijuana is viewed as a fact of life—of some lives, anyway. This is true, of course, but so are a lot of matters that don't exactly need free ads.) The propaganda for the picture tells us that it is basically about changes of life for its principal characters, but lives always change in pictures, or at any rate in most of them. The only really discernible theme in *Wonder Boys* is serendipity.

Now that Douglas no longer feels obliged to be as power-conscious as his father, now that he can crinkle and uncrinkle as a character, he has some friendliness and some wit. McDormand has become a changed actress to me, for a cinematically irrelevant but inescapable reason. Last year she appeared Off-Broadway in a difficult, long and rewarding new play on the Oedipus theme by Dare Clubb, and I couldn't help seeing her chancellor here as a scherzo against that accomplishment. Downey is a welcome annoyance: he always shows more talent than his casualness seems to deserve. There's a shape to his performances that he is careful not to make a fuss about. As for Maguire, the first few times I saw him I was taken by his reticent appeal but wondered whether he would ever learn to speak. Now I am willing to concede that he is what he is, a film person, a personality, not in any full sense an actor. If he learned more about acting, he might crimp his appeal.

The director, Curtis Hanson, who made the overrated *L. A. Confidential*, has succeeded here in evoking atmosphere, the sense that his people inhabit a world of their own, certainly related to ours but a slightly wacky private club nonetheless.

Much has been munched in the press lately about a new movement in Danish film called Dogma 95, a "vow of chastity" under which some directors agreed to dispense with high-tech trimmings, to make films on location with natural light and handheld cameras. So far, the doctrine has been more remarkable than the Dogma films that have arrived here. According to the latest *Variety International Film Guide*, four Dogma films have been made to date. One of them, Thomas Vinterberg's *Celebration*, was released here two years ago and, for all its no-frills, proved to be a lengthy cliché, one more account of a large family gathering, affectionate at the start and gradually stripping down to the hates and lusts and injuries festering underneath.

Now comes **Mifune** (Sony Pictures Classics), directed by Søren Kragh-Jacobsen, based on his original story, with a screenplay by him and Anders Thomas Jensen. The title is the most courageous thing about it. Not a great many potential viewers will recognize the name of the late Japanese actor, and those who do will not find him in the film. His name is a code word in a game between two brothers, one of whom is retarded, living today on a Danish farm. So the title is a real wild card.

Mifune was not meant to be funny, yet the screenplay might have been written by S. J. Perelman or, in his parodic vein, Woody Allen. In Copenhagen, a young man named Kresten marries a young woman named Claire and is given a good job with her father's company. After a febrile wedding night, Kresten gets a phone call telling him that his farmer father has just died. Kresten hurries to the farm where he finds his father's corpse and his full-grown but childish brother, Rud. The place is a mess, so Kresten advertises for a housekeeper. And who is hired? Liva, a luscious blonde whom we have already seen working as a call girl and who wants to get away from her pimp. Kresten doesn't seem as surprised as we

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are that a pin-up bomb-shell wants this menial job.

So there they are, Liva and Kresten and Rud, when Claire arrives unexpectedly to find out what's keeping her bridegroom down on the farm. Nothing has yet happened between Liva and Kresten, but of course Claire doesn't believe it. She storms out, refusing to listen to an explanation. (That impatience is a stock device of shoddily carpentered scripts.) Both Kresten's marriage and his city job are finished. He is stuck there on this lonely farm, with his dear but impaired brother and this (not quite) retired hooker. All, which we can foretell, does not run smoothly thereafter.

Anders W. Berthelsen is acceptable as Kresten; the attractive Iben Hjejle makes Liva as credible as possible; Jesper Asholt doesn't flinch from the trite task of portraying a mental defective in a rural drama. The directing, insofar as it matters, is warm enough, the cinematography is simple, but the whole is like a burlesque of those gigantic, stark Scandinavian novels that came along early in the last century, their components shredded here and fed remorselessly into a blender. Is it so dark in the North that no one around this film could see its ridiculousness? (Maybe, Dogma 95 notwithstanding, they could use a little extra light.) ■

Jed Perl on Art

Theory for Gallerygoers

The drawings of Wes Mills are the essence of eccentricity. Working in pencil on small, mostly square sheets of paper, this thirty-nine-year-old artist presents delicate, unprepossessing abstract enigmas, and presents them with unfussy precision. In one drawing there are three soft-edged grays moving across the page, each one echoed by a leaf-shaped, roughly overlapping spidery outline. In another drawing seven lines rise upward, merge into one, then drop down, creating a sort of mountainous form. Mills presents these little happenings lovingly. Many of his drawings have an overall cool platinum tone that is achieved by softly working the graphite into the sheet. His deliberateness can make a gallerygoer look deliberately. At his show this February at the Joseph Helman Gallery I kept looking, although I wasn't exactly sure what I was looking at. Weeks later I cannot say much more about the why or the wherefore of those three leaf shapes or that rising and falling bundle of lines, yet the images are still bumping around in my mind's eye.

When I go to galleries to see new art I am overwhelmed with impressions, but most of them evaporate very fast. What is important is, first, the work that holds me in the gallery and, second, the work that sticks with me afterwards. I don't care about what I see unless it holds my eye, and that is an almost involuntary experience; but once something has that hold on me—even in a tentative, equivocal way—other factors come into play, and I find myself reaching for analogies, ideas, theories. I look for ways to extend the experience, to open it up, to see how far it will go. In recent decades, some people have argued that a direct, unmediated approach to contemporary art is by its very nature anti-theoretical; but the situation is much more complicated. I have no patience with a theory that tells me where to look—but once I am looking, it is the most natural thing in the world to think about what I am seeing. There is an overlapping and balancing and contrasting of ideas that can parallel and complicate the play of new and unfamiliar impressions.

Wes Mills's motifs are interestingly varied, and he handles the pencil, that most plainspoken of graphic tools, in a great many different ways. I have the feeling that Mills is starting from scratch every time he picks up a piece of paper, and right there you have an idea about picture-making. The pared-down, almost-nothing-to-it look of his work has a long history; and a gallerygoer will of course make comparisons between Mills's reticences and ambiguities and the related attitudes of intent self-involvement in the work of Cy Twombly, Richard Tuttle, and Robert Ryman. You might say that each of these artists is taking on composition, structure, sensibility, and meaning as a kind of contemplative exercise. While Mills's show was at Helman, Tuttle had an exhibition of new relief sculptures at Sperone Westwater. Tuttle has turned squares of plywood into mystical gameboards on which gnomic arrangements of wood blocks and whimsical passages of paint are frozen in absurdist play. I saw his show twice, liked it both times, but also felt a certain strain in the artist's oh-so-casual deliberateness.

There is an improvisational wit to this kind of back-to-the-basics image-making that is perhaps a young artist's game. The interest of Mills's show had to do with seeing an idiosyncratic minimalist in the first, intense phase of his development. (That period in Tuttle's work is long gone.) This show—it is Mills's second at Helman—had a carefully experimental air. I had the feeling that the artist was allowing small things to just happen on the page, and then musing over them. The exhibition also included some paintings, almost exclusively in black-and-white, thematically close to the drawings, although with a more formal (and, maybe, off-putting) impact.

Mills is a sort of art-researcher, letting little genies out of little bottles. On one sheet there is a cloud of teensy, broken lines. In another drawing, this one titled *My second guess*, a few pale-as-can-be dots of color rise up the page. There is a tentative but insistent quality to those spots of color that reminds me of Duchamp's *Pharmacy* (1914), where a conventional art print of a winter landscape has been altered with a couple of spots of color; and the thought is underscored by the fact that three drawings in Mills's show are titled *Duchamp*. Mills's drawings elicit a quizzical, open-ended response, but the work does not seem to be a secret to which the artist necessarily has the key. I was not surprised to learn that Mills has an interest in Tantric Buddhism. Looking at a drawing with a single, quivering line, or another with two small rectangular forms, each punctuated by one dot, artist and audience may be having the same reaction. You look and you think: maybe.

Mills is a kind of fundamentalist; and a somewhat humorous one. He has taken drawing apart, and he presents the component parts (a scratched line here, a shaded form there) as such quizzically isolated images that his interest in an inviolate essence can seem a slightly odd-ball pursuit. I expect that Mills invites such thoughts. He is the most talented among a slew of younger artists who have

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come of age at a time when nobody can even begin to agree as to whether there are any basics or fundamentals to art, and they have responded by glorifying the fly-weight, the hardly-there, the shadowy trace. I think that Mills gives some real drama to this kind of chic whispery nihilism. If Mills is being embraced by a small but growing group of artists and gallerygoers, it is because he makes something of their uncertainties, of their sense that art is too embattled to be anything but cagey and elusive.

There is a fear of form now—or maybe it would be better to describe this as a kind of embarrassment. Many people assume that artists who take form as their subject (and that is what Mills does, in his deliberately equivocal way) are cloistering themselves, whether they are quirky back-to-basics types, of the Mills or Tuttle variety; or purists who look to Ellsworth Kelly; or realists who work directly from life and regard the exact study of figure or still life as an artist's fundamental activity. Of course such ambitions can be embraced—even revered—for their isolationist posture. Kelly is a huge favorite these days. Yet many gallerygoers are suspicious of artists who claim to be getting to the fundamentals or the essentials, perhaps because they feel that we have been there too many times before. We have seen so many artists who claimed to be uncovering the essence of art end up with something that we can at best characterize as a remarkable personal style.

COURTESY JOSEPH HELMAN GALLERY, NEW YORK

Wes Mills, "From five ingredients of a cow," 1999

And fear of form is only the beginning of our troubles. The gallerygoers who have not by now fallen into Tracey Emin's unmade bed or some other ridiculous outtake of the "Sensation" brouhaha are so determined to be sensible that they may be suspicious of any strong or complicated impression that art makes, whether through its subject matter or its narrative complexity or its piled-up metaphors or its emotional appeal. Sophisticated gallerygoers are now armored gallerygoers, afraid of trusting their instincts. Worse yet, they are afraid of their conflicting instincts—of their wish for some clarity of form, and then for something else. Yet what is wrong with asking artists for layers, for ambiguities? If we are afraid to ask artists for anything much, this may be because we are worried about getting in too deep, about being forced to revise our ideas. By now there is an unwillingness to think about underlying issues—about factors that run through all art. This unwillingness casts a pall over gallerygoing.

But if an artist can initially pull us in, then we want to keep going. There is something, for example, to the landscape paintings of Andrew Lenaghan, but the very specificity that initially attracts me finally numbs me: this is one-note virtuosity. Lenaghan, whose immaculately rendered impressions of scuzzy, backstreet urban scenery in Brooklyn and New Jersey were at George Adams in January, has a feeling for a kind of wrong-side-of-the-tracks lyricism. He knows the lost-to-the-world feeling that you may have when you come upon an abandoned building. And in a couple of paintings in which he raises his sights to a Brooklyn church steeple, he gets a smidge of the clear-eyed poetry of Christen Købke's images of the turrets of a Danish castle.

Still, the more I looked at Lenaghan's graffiti-scarred walls and scraggly bushes and broken pavements, the more I wanted this documentary style to have some clearer structural underpinnings. I was bothered by Lenaghan's brushwork: not by its finicky scale, but by the lack of rhythm or calligraphic drive in those small strokes. His color has a little energy, but there isn't enough elasticity to the way he works high-keyed blues and greens against murky shadows. There is none of the probity of color or clarity of brushwork that gives Canaletto's literalism its underlying pressure.

Yet when I look at the work of an artist who brings color weights or calligraphic accents to the fore, I find myself wondering about the undercurrents there, too, which might be metaphorical or psychological. Those are factors that I look for in Wes Mills's work. He invites my questions; that is one of his strengths. I found myself asking similar questions in front of the paintings of Salvatore Federico at the SAI Gallery in February. In each of Federico's canvases there is a many-sided, single-colored geometric form, set on a ground of another, contrasting color. Federico is in his fifties, and in his work he still registers the impact of the minimalist Tony Smith, with whom he studied at Hunter College in the 1960s.

Federico's pictures, with their heraldic shapes wrought from lots of odd angles, are a witty footnote to a tradition of stripped-down abstract invention of which Ellsworth Kelly is the current leading figure. Federico's images suggest designs for bizarrely over-elaborated ritual knives or axes. In *Celestine V*, the form that practically fills the canvas, with seventeen sides, is a jagged up-front enigma, a green outburst on a blue ground. Other canvases are less aggressive—such as *Barnabas*, a nine-sided shape in rosy pink with three irregular "limbs" that suggest a schematic impression of a dancing figure. Federico's paint surfaces are impassive, probably too impassive: the pigment lacks weight. But his absorption in formal games has a fantastical undercurrent. This is the work of an intriguingly excitable cool cat.

Certain painters—Lenaghan and Federico are good examples—play at the extremes. Their work suggests an enclosed system, whether of naturalistic observation or abstract purity. When I stand before this kind of work, I want to feel that the artist has somehow taken into account the things that he has excluded—that the look of the work is a matter of choice; and the trouble with Lenaghan's work is that he doesn't manage to give us this sense of

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style as a gamble. For other artists, however, the zigzag path of a gallerygoer's mind—the tendency to consider the abstract logic of a representational form or the emotional implications of compositional values—is a constant process, the very nature of seeing. In the still lifes of Evelyn Twitchell (at the Prince Street Gallery in November) and those of Anne Dunn (an artist who has shown little in New York in recent years, save for this small exhibition at the Dactyl Foundation in October) the brushstrokes that reveal leaf, flower, fruit, vegetable, table, and easel are also simultaneously dissolving these forms into line, pigment, and pattern. Twitchell has a feeling for silvery tonalities; in her best work, which almost invariably involves growing things (mostly plants and flowers), there is a gently twinkling quality, at moments reminiscent of Jacques Villon's paintings. Dunn's still lifes have curious subjects—some onions and potatoes are arranged on an easel in a way that suggests a crucifixion—and there is a sweet-and-sour dissonance to the contrast of elegant, concise drawing and almost luridly high-keyed color that sets the sobriety of the composition interestingly on edge.

A GALLERYGOER'S TUMBLED impressions are easily taken for granted—so much so, in fact, that we are in danger of dismissing the experience of looking at a range of contemporary work as one that bears little or no analysis. Moving from gallery to gallery, approaching this work this way and that work that way, and then trying this approach on that work, and then discovering that all the approaches get mixed up, I may imagine that there is no logic to what I'm doing, no rationale to my way of taking things in. And the trouble begins right there, when we dismiss our own experience as merely improvisational.

Gallerygoers have become masochists. The smartest ones may not trust the pundits who have pushed them to look at Julian Schnabel, Jeff Koons, and now Jenny Saville; but they do not trust their own layered reactions, either. Too many people dismiss their intuitions before they see where they lead. I think that the educated public is overwhelmed by the thought of trying to make sense of hints, flashes, ambiguities—but that is a lot of what looking at art is about.

Anybody who imagines that things ever really were nailed down is in for a big surprise. Back in 1914, when Clive Bell published *Art*, and argued that the key factor was always what he called "significant form," Roger Fry immediately pointed out that Bell was juggling more factors than he would quite admit. Even Bell, Fry observed, did not believe that you could "create significant form in the abstract." That would lead to "a naked and empty aestheticism. The artist," Fry agreed with Bell, "must have something to get into a passion about." Which brings us right back to our layered, never-quite-falling-into-place feelings, our search for what Fry called the mysterious "*x* in the equation," the thing that changes as the need for significant form remains constant. "The common quality is significant form, that is to say, forms related to one another in a particular manner, which is always the outcome of their relation to *x* (where *x* is anything that is not of itself form)."

THE GALLERYGOERS WHO feel that they are balancing competing values are not downplaying form or content, but grappling with a constantly changing equation, an unstable mix of elements. Far from rejecting ideas and theories, a gallerygoer wants to have a whole set of keys, so that it will be possible to unlock many different experiences. As we visit the galleries and look at art, we reach for ideas that help us to understand what we are seeing: we see which ideas fit, we discard some, we go back, we look more.

Last November, for example, while looking at Raymond Mason's exhibition of painted relief sculptures of great urban centers at the Marlborough Gallery, I was reminded of some old and now very unfashionable ideas about geographical character or temperament as factors in the development of style; Meyer Schapiro touched on this material in 1953 in his essay "Style." Mason is an Englishman who has lived in Paris since the Second World War; in France he is admired for his polychromed reliefs, many of which represent crowded streets. I have always been intrigued by Mason's elaborately articulated spaces; and this relatively recent group of works, in which he turns from his somewhat caricatured figures to bird's-eye panoramic views of London, Paris, Rome, and New York, is the best of his sculpture that I have seen. Taken together, Mason's panoramas function as a series of interlocking essays on the urban experience. He focuses on topographical differences—which are formal differences—and in doing so he gets at a range of urban moods, even at a sense of Zeitgeist or worldview. Which brings us to the Schapiro essay.

Schapiro defines style as "a system of forms with a quality and a meaningful expression through which the personality of the artist and the broad outlook of a group are visible"; and he associates the idea of there being a national or geographical element in style with late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century theorists such as Wölfflin and Riegl. In Mason's reliefs, each painted in delicate pinks, blues, yellows, and greens, the artist suggests the distinctive spatial character of each city, and then he lets the expressive possibilities expand in our minds. He allows his style to be guided by the style of the place. We see the long, embracing trajectories of Parisian boulevards, the more impacted and layered arrangements of Rome, and the verticality and deep, almost knifelike thrusts into space that characterize New York. Out of the arrangements of the streets and the buildings, Mason wrests a range of emotional colorations. And then we bring our personal recollections into Mason's images: we imagine ourselves going into those streets that we cannot quite see, we walk them in memory or fantasy, we think about what happened to us there.

Mason's reliefs (which also include less successful views of Hong Kong and Edinburgh) can be described in terms of Roger Fry's "*x*" equation, if we imagine each city as the "*x*" that particularizes the constant of form. And for a New Yorker to stand in a gallery in Manhattan and look at Raymond Mason's New York, with its vertiginous downtown view, is to feel the "*x*"s multiplying, as I consider what an English artist who lives in Paris has to say to a New Yorker about his own city. In another one of Schapiro's theoretical essays, this one on "Philosophy and Worldview in Painting" (it is a compilation from previously unpublished material that is included in the recent collection *Worldview in Painting*) the subject of landscape art comes up. Schapiro's almost giddy description of all the factors that come into play when we watch an artist making sense of the world brings Mason's show to mind. "We make no strict distinction," he says, "between the forms, the ideas, and the meanings; the ideas are not only the explicit ones that can be put into words, but—though I am embarrassed to say this so categorically—there are also implicit ideas, a disposition of the artist toward a particular set of values, what is vaguely called his outlook..., though linked, of course, with behavior, with habit, and with response to situations."

What I hear as I read this passage, with its juggling of the explicit and the implicit, of form and idea, of fixed habit and immediate response, is an adventure not unlike that of the gallerygoer whose mind is open and is seeing new things. Schapiro, of course, was an avid follower of new art, and I expect that his discussion of worldview owes as much to his encounters with the paintings of the Abstract Expressionists who were his friends as to his studies of medieval illuminated manuscripts.

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Schapiro's consideration and reconsideration of ideas and theories in the light of empirical experience suggests a mind that is always on the go, that is crystal clear yet never locked into a particular way of seeing things. I am very interested that Schapiro speaks about his own embarrassment at the complexities involved in understanding what we see. Those who find, as they go to the galleries, that they are embarrassed by their sense of a strong underlying outlook—or, for that matter, by the unabashed purity of a form—might consider Schapiro's encouraging example. When gallerygoers should really start worrying is when they are no longer embarrassed by anything that art makes them think or feel. ■

The Extremist

By FRANK KERMODE

Selected Letters of Rebecca West Edited, Annotated, and Introduced by Bonnie Kime Scott

(Yale University Press, 497 pp., $35)

CICELY (OR CICILY) Fairfield was born in 1892 and died in 1983. At nineteen she began a successful career as a journalist and adopted the name Rebecca West, the heroine of Ibsen's *Rosmersholm*. Her prodigious ability as a journalist and a reviewer can be ascertained from Jane Marcus's selection, *The Young Rebecca*, which appeared in 1982. If ever a writer so young demonstrated what Shakespeare called "the flash and outbreak of a fiery mind," it was she. Hardly anybody now writes such devastating reviews, and few later feminists have written on politics with such accurate fury.

In the course of a life spanning most of the century, she lost none of her force. As traveler, novelist, and political essayist, West won fame on both sides of the Atlantic and grew rich in the process. She made an enormous number of interesting or influential friends and acquaintances in America and Europe as well as England, and she wrote them many long fluent letters, which she expected them to keep. In her twenties she was welcomed in the most refined and adventurous artistic circles, frequented the Vorticist nightclub the Cave of the Golden Calf, was a friend of Ford Madox Ford, and contributed both to Ford's *New English Review* and Wyndham Lewis's noisy avant-garde magazine *BLAST*. At the instigation of Virginia Woolf, Ottoline Morrell invited her to the Bloomsbury outpost at Garsington, an honor that West did not greatly enjoy. She must have known pretty well everybody she would have wanted to know, and had more respect than affection for Bloomsbury.

West's first book, a brief study of Henry James, was published in 1916, and her first novel, *The Return of the Soldier*, in 1918. Other novels followed at irregular intervals, none achieving the huge success of her big book about Yugoslavia, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* (1941), and her studies in treachery, *The Meaning of Treason* (1947), later revised and augmented as *The New Meaning of Treason* (1964). The novels, eleven in all, are somewhat disappointing, coming from a writer so well acquainted with Henry James and Ford Madox Ford. They fell into neglect until, to her great satisfaction, they were successfully revived by the feminist Virago Press in the 1980s. She earned her celebrity by her writing, but her private life also received, over the years, a measure of public attention that was far less welcome.

Many people still alive and not yet falling apart knew Dame Rebecca in her later years, and could therefore, if they were so disposed, claim a tenuous connection with the style and the manners of the literary world of almost a century ago. I met her in 1969, when we were both serving as judges for the first Booker Prize. Whether in modest London restaurants or in the grand country house that we had been lent for our deliberations, she provided exhilarating but often daunting company. It never seemed to occur to her that her opinion of a book might reasonably be questioned, or that anybody else's deserved more than the most cursory consideration. Iris Murdoch? "Miss Murdoch writes a very good book one year and a poor one the next. This is the bad year." And out she went. Muriel Spark? Clever but flimsy. I tried to promote a novel by Nicholas Mosley called *Impossible Object*—and it must be said that this book, unlike some of its competitors, is still worth reading—but it was dismissed as a piece of not very interesting narrative trickery. (Dame Rebecca had little time for anything that looked a bit like what she thought to be the wrong kind of avant-garde, as may be gathered from her remarks concerning T.S. Eliot and other contemporaries such as Yeats. But she loved Proust.) In the end, the other judges felt they had no option but to vote unanimously for her firm though not enthusiastic choice—not at all a bad book but, like most novels after thirty years, now quite forgotten.

WE WHO HAD lost the argument were more delighted than irritated by the company of so formidable, talkative, and domineering a septuagenarian. Readers of this handsome selection of her letters will see why. From the outset West thought and wrote with every appearance of authority, she read indefatigably, and she consolidated acquaintance with mostly genial, no-nonsense letters. Still in her twenties, she was on familiar terms with the likes of George Bernard Shaw and Bertrand Russell. In some respects, though, she had a hard life, with much illness and deep, insoluble personal troubles which she discusses in her letters with considerable candor.

At twenty-one, West became the lover of H.G. Wells, and her private life was dominated by her essentially rather wretched, and, as it proved, undiscardable relationships with him and with their son. Wells was a middle-aged womanizer with a complacent wife, and West was by no means the first young woman whom he seduced. As some of these letters insist, he was nearly impossible to live with; but the affair lasted from 1913 to 1923 when the son, Anthony West, was nine years old. She loved them both, but she believed them to have made it their business to ensure that, despite its many diverting aspects, her life would be essentially unhappy.

There is in her letters a curious strain of energetic self-pity. Some "external force is working against me," she complains; or "my life is something of a nightmare." The "external force" operated through her other kinsfolk: her elder sister, a distinguished doctor against whom she had many grudges; and her husband of nearly

FRANK KERMODE's new book, *Shakespeare's Language*, will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in May.

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forty years, a banker whose health broke down and who chased other women. They lived in a grand country house and in evident comfort, but he pretended to be short of money, made West pay the servants' wages out of her earnings, and cheated her in other ways. After his death, she provided a friend with a list of the women her husband had seduced or attempted to seduce. "What I object to is the disregard for my dignity."

A believer in women's sexual freedom, she had a number of adventures herself, an unhappy one with Lord Beaverbrook, the newspaper magnate and politician, and another, in her fifties, with the judge Francis Biddle, whom she met in 1946 at the Nuremberg trials, when she was a reporter and he was the chief American prosecutor. And there were others. She once attended a dinner, given by Prince Antoine Bibescu, at which every other woman present had been, like her, a mistress of the Prince. Without being anything like a female equivalent of Wells, she still claimed her rights.

Wells, it seems, was not a good father to his illegitimate son. He was remote when he should have been close, and interfering when he should have kept out of it, as when West decided to adopt the boy in order to ensure that he would never need to admit his illegitimacy. "I always knew you would hurt me to death some day," she writes in 1913, almost at the beginning of their affair. "You've always been unconsciously hostile to me ... I was the wrong sort of person for you to have to do with." Ten years later she is writing about her "appalling life" with Wells, complaining of his "nervous instability" and his "fits of almost maniacal rage." He, too, was mean about money, allowing her to pay the household expenses out of her earnings, and appearing to grudge every penny spent on Anthony, who had a serious and costly illness and other understandable problems.

At this point, in 1923, she left Wells. She calls him insane, claiming that "he has a violent anti-sex complex like Tolstoy's—You punish the female who evokes your lust." She hears that he now maltreats her successor, "gives her black eyes and so on, which is surely not done in our set." West is soon complaining to Bertrand Russell of her "hard luck with men," thinking this time of her abortive affair with Beaverbrook. A decade or so later, at forty-one years of age, she told her American agent that "I realise that sleeping with people is a whole lot of fun but it doesn't amount to a row of pins ... unless you sleep with someone who is capable of a grand attitude to life and is better than you."

It was a lot to ask, and on the whole she did not think well of men. Perhaps she briefly found one who came up to the mark in Judge Biddle, though very little seems to be known about that episode except that it happened. And whatever her adventures, she was sure that she always loved the intolerable Wells. "Dear H.G.," she wrote when he died in 1946 and she was just embarking on her affair with Biddle, "he was a devil, he ruined my life, he starved me, he was an inexhaustible source of love and friendship to me for thirty-four years."

I DISLIKE WRITING ABOUT other people's intimacies, especially when they are as disastrous as West's relationship with her son. It is horrible to imagine being talked about in the same way oneself. But we are dealing with the letters of a writer who thought it important to preserve them in public collections, and who set great store by her skills in self-representation. She doesn't conceal the exasperation and the pain that was an almost invariable aspect of her dealings with Anthony. She had the care of him mostly as a single mother, and found it irksome. Always conscious of "the million instances of cruelty & unkindness & meanness & treachery & imbecility & vamping that have happened to me with no intervals for refreshment since I was

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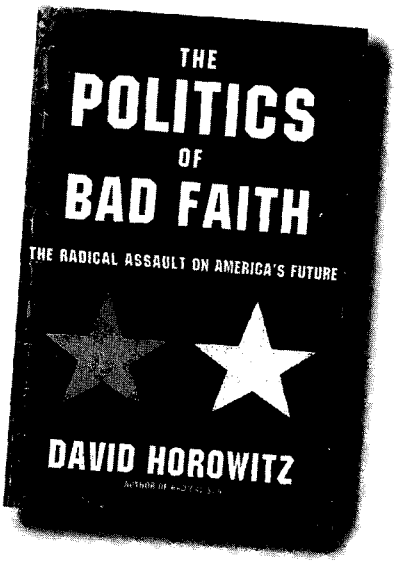

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twenty," she fretted about domestic responsibility, needing above all to get on with her work.

One can believe that times were hard and the baby inconsiderate. Having gone to the south coast to avoid the zeppelin attacks on London, they were repeatedly bombed by German planes. It seemed that the only solution to their problems of safety and working time was to pack the boy off to a boarding school. When he later complained that this happened when he was only two years old, his mother was shocked and corrected him: he was three.

Time did not heal this breach, and as West's biographer Victoria Glendinning puts it, mother and son spent "half a century scoring points off each other." In 1955 Anthony West published a novel called *Heritage*, which contains unkind portraits of his mother, her husband, and Wells. West is represented as an actress who, having married the Wells figure as a short cut to the top of the tree, neglects her son. She found *Heritage* "full of monstrous clotted spite ... the vulgarity of the book is astounding." It was "a clownish account of H.G. and a glossy magazine story about an actress and a little lord Fauntleroy idyll about himself." Anthony West defended himself by arguing that he could not be an effective writer without using "the central experiences" of his life. There was a deep mutual mistrust and even dislike, compounded by arguments about money and property. The quarrel was never made up, and West cut Anthony out of her will.

It seems that West's deepest relationships always involved ineradicable affection and deep disappointment, all at the same time. That is certainly true of her relations with Wells and her son and her husband, and also of her connection with Beaverbrook. In the, end, she had to conclude that no man was truly "capable of a grand attitude to life."

THERE IS A similar ambivalence in West's attitude to others less closely associated with her. Proud of her Scottish-Irish ancestry and of her own gifts, she was open-minded and prepared for all kinds of social adventures, yet quick to condemn the manners of the most casual acquaintance. One of the most surprising remarks in this book is her claim that she is "not a snob." Not, perhaps, in any sense that would be thought worthy of notice by her own set; but she is sometimes quick to express disapproval of inferior classes of person, however respected by the larger world—if they had the misfortune, for instance, to be educated at a "redbrick" university, that is, not at Oxford or Cambridge. She sometimes describes people as "common," a class usage I am glad to say I have not heard lately.

Among the persons so described are Mrs. Wallis Simpson and, perhaps more strikingly, Ingrid Bergman. Having dined with Bergman and her husband Roberto Rossellini, West decides that the actress, though "a nice soul," is "common and mannerless, with a flatness of which Henry [West's husband] discovered the secret when he found that she was half-German—her mother came from Hamburg, and she might well be a housemaid in a big Hamburg hotel." (One is grateful for the tincture of generosity in that epithet "big.") Afterwards she wrote to Bergman, saying among other "honest" remarks that "you may love your husband very much, but you should face the fact that he has no talent," and advising her to change directors at once. She does admit that this was an extraordinary letter, and says she had never written its like before. It does not appear that Bergman replied. A pity; since West was capable of changing her estimate. One sees this from the letters addressed to Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., who in the course of five years ceases to be insolent, impudent, and mendacious, with a noticeable "affinity with Goebbels," and becomes a fast friend.

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Rebecca West, c. 1923

As an instance of fine discriminations of class, consider West's account, in 1927, of an "attractive young Jew of about twenty-eight—not a Kike, he belongs to a very old established Jewish family"—who, as it turns out, tried to rape her. At least he wasn't common. All this is the more extraordinary in that West was a philo-Semite, and regarded anti-Semitism as a tiresome social disorder that should not affect educated people. But here considerations of class prevailed, and a sort of careless candor. She could be exuberantly unkind, and could hardly complain if others followed suit. Virginia Woolf said of her that "she has great vitality: is a broad browed, very vigorous, undistinguished woman, but a buffeter and a battler: has taken the waves, I suppose; & can talk in any language: why then this sense of her being a lit up modern block, floodlit by electricity?"

Politically she was, in her own account, "the last liberal left." She loathed the very idea of treachery, and so often advertised her deep fear of American Communism that she had to repudiate descriptions of her as a McCarthyite, calling the Senator "a stupid and violent demagogue." Yet she believed that the United States was seriously threatened by Communist infiltration, and that Anglo-American relations were endangered by the press accounts of McCarthy's committee that described it as a tribunal comparable to the Inquisition. Communists, she thought, were being promoted over the heads of non-Communists: "Quite obviously, it was a tremendous advantage to an ambitious young man or woman to be a Communist if they wanted quick advancement in the American civil service. This was hard on the young man or woman who was not a Communist."

If it seems that a certain intemperance colored West's political opinions, it must be said that this was an aspect of her general style. Shaw said of her early journalism that she "could handle a pen as brilliantly as ever I could, and much more savagely," and it is clear that at no time

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in her life had she any idea how to be moderate and dull. In her final years, she would write to people who proposed to write about her, demanding excisions and pointing out errors and omissions ("I would also wish that you had taken the trouble to learn something about my personal life ... I find your study of my work quite wide of the mark"). A fierce critic, always keen to correct the misapprehensions of others, she lacked self-criticism; and at moments of stress she substituted for it self-pity.

Bonnie Kime Scott must have enjoyed her labor on this book. It is not quite flawless (there are corrigible slips in the text and corrigible faults in the notes), but she has done well to continue the work done by an earlier generation of feminists towards the restoration of Rebecca West to a place of honor among the writers of the twentieth century. ■

Collapsophe

By PETER GREEN

The Plato Papers: A Prophecy by Peter Ackroyd

(Nan A. Talese/Doubleday, 173 pp., $21.95)

I.

WHAT DRIVES ANYONE to speculate, or, worse, to prophesy, about the future? Curiosity, and an interest in self-preservation: it isn't hard to see why Delphi commanded such a market for so long. And in the longer view, there is always the fun of seeing the guesses confirmed or refuted. Jules Verne got aviation more or less right, and H.G. Wells was depressingly accurate about the atom bomb; but Arnold Toynbee's *Study of History* remains remarkable mainly for having got its argument so wrong on such a massive scale, and Orwell's bleak forecast of the future as a boot stamping on a human face forever never envisaged the Soviet monolith's ignominious collapse less than a decade after 1984.

Maybe it is the impossibility of being proved wrong that elicits predictions aimed centuries, or even millennia, into the future; but there is also that ever-present urge to escape the less-than-ideal realities of the here-and-now. Hence also the notion of Utopia, the supposedly perfect community that, as its punning name reminds us, is situated nowhere. Not that its two most famous proponents, Plato and Thomas More—with both of whom Peter Ackroyd shows more than a nodding acquaintance—are much calculated to appeal today. Plato's *Republic*, and certainly his *Laws*, offers a nightmarish picture of intellectual totalitarianism, complete with eugenics, slavery, censorship of art and literature, and communal ownership of all goods, women included. More's *Utopia* was similarly communistic: no private property, civic mess-halls, and ferocious penalties for sexual offenses. Six hours of manual work a day was mandatory; education and medical services were free. It sounds not unlike Fidel Castro's Cuba.

A cynic might say that there was not much to choose between such blueprints for mankind and the raging modern dystopias of Zamyatin, Huxley (*Ape and Essence* rather than *Brave New World*), and Orwell's *Animal Farm*. Small wonder that in this nuclear age the doomsayers have dominated the field. But this same futurology also produced, ever since Olaf Stapledon's *Last and First Men* (1930), a strong tendency towards ethical idealism and, sometimes, cosmic mysticism: the urge to redesign the human race, and predict a new sort of humanity, to sweep away our accumulation of grubby and demeaning mistakes, and make a completely fresh start.

Indeed, it was in much the same spirit that Plato, surveying the murderous excesses of both oligarchs and democrats in his famous Seventh Letter, began moving towards a Theory of Forms or Ideas. What he envisaged was the notion of an absolute truth, an ideal of reality that all mundane phenomena no more than approximated. In spiritually barren times, this dream of the Logos becomes immensely attractive, as something above and outside the seemingly meaningless fragmentation of life as

PETER GREEN is a professor of classics at the University of Iowa.

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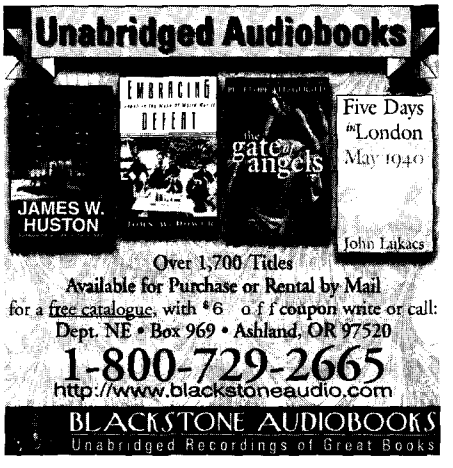
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it is commonly lived.

Now comes Peter Ackroyd, fresh from his biography of Thomas More, with *The Plato Papers: A Prophecy*. Set in or about the year 3700 C.E., this short fiction reaches America garlanded with hyperbolic tributes ("a timeless literary masterpiece" and so on) from London. Sounds important, doesn't it? So what kind of seer is Ackroyd? What does he vouchsafe about the future of the race?

II.

We begin with a short time-chart, which raises many questions but answers none. The period between c. 3500 B.C. and c. 300 B.C. (this is Ackroyd's happy Christian usage: no B.C.E. or C.E. for him) was the "Age of Orpheus." Orpheus, you will recall, was the rather elusive mythical figure whose lyre-playing had the ability to move wild beasts, trees, and rocks, and who made a descent into Hades to rescue his wife Eurydice (but looked back at her on their way out, thus breaking the spell and losing her). Orpheus met his death at the hands of wild Thracian women. Incensed at his introduction of homosexuality into their country, they tore off his head, which travelled, still singing, "down the swift Hebrus to the Lesbian shore," as Milton put it in *Lycidas*. So which aspect of Orpheus, one asks oneself, is supposed to characterize Ackroyd's huge "Age of Orpheus," stretching from the mists of neolithic Greece down to the aftermath of the battle of Ipsus in 301? Enchantment and magic? Stupid egotism? Gay pride going before a fall? What do Cycladic islanders of the third millennium B.C.E. have in common with the first generation of Alexander's Successors, those wolfish generals who sliced up his empire like a Saturday-night pizza? Ackroyd does not say.

His second world-historical span, from c. 300 B.C. to c. A.D. 1500, is a tad clearer. This is the Age of the Apostles. They stop short just before Wyclif, Henry VIII, and the Reformation, which offers a good clue to Ackroyd's sympathies; but they also start early in the Hellenistic era, and this suggests that our author is well aware of the various salvationist and eschatological movements (some of them, incidentally, long before 300 B.C.E.) that offer students of the period the odd sense of coming events casting shadows. From Empedocles, the traveling shaman and self-styled "immortal god" offering prophecies and healing, to the slave-magician (and, later, revolutionary leader) Eunus, mockingly bidden by his master's guests to "remember them when he came into his kingdom," the pre-Christian Hellenic world has always offered a powerful sense of *déjà vu*. Classics professors have been known to use this anticipatory evidence to tease their born-again students; and something tells me that Ackroyd, too, has his own agenda for it.

His third period, from c. A.D. 1500 to c. A.D. 2300, he calls the Age of Mouldwarp. "Mouldwarp" is not an expressive neologism coined by Ackroyd. The word has been around for centuries, and it rates an enlightening entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Its basic meaning (in an astonishing variety of spellings) is "mole," with the stress both literal and metaphorical on the mole's two best-known characteristics: blindness and subterranean burrowing. As early as 1380, the word was being used by religious polemicists: Wyclif attacked "thes blynde moldewerpis, evere wrotyng [rooting] in the erthe aboute erthely muk," and in 1607 one cleric sermonized that "they begin their works with a mine underground (Romish pioners, Antichristian molewarps)." For Ackroyd, the whole period from the Reformation through the Enlightenment to today and beyond is the Age of Mouldwarp. Get it? We can't say that we haven't been warned about his view of modernity or his view of the Protestant ethic.

This, of course, is where the prophesying begins. From c. A.D. 2300 till c. A.D. 3400, according to Ackroyd, comes the tantalizing Age of Witspell. This term, in contrast to Mouldwarp, does appear to be a neologism, coined on the analogy of such existing terms as "witworm" (a persistent humorist) or "witrack" (the knack, as the *OED* happily puts it, of "eliciting speech by wit as a rack elicits confession.") Witspell, then: the magic of wit? A period dominated by wit? The era ends, in any case, some three hundred years ahead of The Present, which is c. A.D. 3700; and before we are pitched into his narrative, Ackroyd offers us a further series of clues in the form of quotations from various fictional titles. The reader's instinct is to skip these and to cut to the chase: an unwise move, since we have here some characteristically obscure clues to what has been going on between Now and Then, and in the fog of Ackroyd's narrative we need all the help we can get.

We begin in 2030, with one Ronald Corvo (Ackroyd has a weakness for jokey and allusive names), in his treatise *A New Theory of the Earth*, meditating on how, "in this new age of universal and instantaneous communication," the planet Earth might look "to distant observers. It must seem to shimmer in a state of continued excited activity." That is the last recognizable glimpse that we get, so make the most of it. By 2299, Joseph P. can enter in his diary: "All fallen dark and quiet, all gone down. Collapsophe." This picture (post-atomic? what?) is reinforced by the next extract, from a London hymn dated 2302: "We who survive, we scoured ones, in depths of dark dismay, call out of the night of our world, gone as we knew it, as we know it." Two years later, "slivers of light" begin to appear, "riding the waves of darkness." For 2310, we get a snippet from the preamble of a historian, announcing that "the world of science had collapsed, but the divine consciousness of humanity had not yet asserted itself." The preamble parodies those of Herodotus and Thucydides. The historian's name is Myander, the termination presumably being cognate with Alexander and other similar masculine forms, but the historian reveals herself as a woman. This discrepancy proves symptomatic.

Forty years later, in 2350, something really has happened. The positively Byzantine proclamation—"The holy city, restored. Ourselves, revived"—at first suggested to me that Ackroyd had been reading too much Yeats. But the situation is in fact more bizarre than Yeats at his Blavatsky-inspired worst. Less than half a century on, in 2998, we get a clipping from *The London Intelligencer* suggesting that areas of the earth can directly, and consciously, affect their occupants: "This city, for example, is not indifferent to the joys or sufferings of its inhabitants." Not Yeats, then, but a kind of bastard degenerate Stoicism.

Also something to do with the components of a new, restored light. Jump another four hundred years, to 3399, and we have a letter from Popcorn (see above) to Mellitus (more pseudo-classicism) remarking upon "the glorious restoration of human light, and the joy of living on the verge of a new age." What new age, we want to know? And what is human about that light? Well, Popcorn is "beginning to see greatness and munificence erected" all around him, though in what form we are not told: the strike-rate of abstractions in this text is exceptionally high. And what are his fellow-citizens up to? According to Popcorn, "with wonderful zeal" they "have tried to revive and emulate the labours of distant antiquity," for all the world as though they were scholars in the great library of Hellenistic Alexandria. "When asked why they are engaged on this pursuit, they reply 'Why not? What else is there to do?' This is our new spirit!" Beats me.

A century or so passes, and we get another proclamation: "The city bears us. The city loves its burden. Nurture it in return. Do not leave its bounds." The

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quasi-Stoic notion of a world-soul is still going strong, with what sounds like a dab of sentimental Marxism thrown in. On now to the year 3640, and one of the apothegms coined by the "guardian of London," who is named Restituta: "In returning to the origin of all things, we meet our destiny. Do you see our doubles, passing by us weeping? This is the nature of our world." Whatever else may have changed, political aphorisms clearly have not: this specimen is as windily Delphic as any Thought of Chairman Mao.

So, in a state of considerable puzzlement, we reach our final citation, which is dated 3705 and ascribed to the anonymous author of, guess what, *The Plato Papers*. This proem promises more than it delivers. The intention is "to conjure up a likeness of Plato, the great orator of London." Up to a point, the promise is fulfilled; but we are given a reference to his "unhappily brief life" without any subsequent discussion of, or reference to, his death, as well as to "a cruel superstition" that "excercised boundless domination over [his] most elevated and benevolent mind." For the life of me, I cannot figure out what that is supposed to have been. There are also enigmatic allusions to "the conventions of spherical drama" and "the pictures of parishioners lit upon the Wall of our great and glorious city," to remind us that Plato's London isn't exactly that of Tony Blair. But from this point on, we are on our own.

III.

THE FIRST THING one notices about Ackroyd's future is the way it keeps harping on the remote past. Not only is the London orator called Plato, but our first introduction to the world of 3705 C.E. is by way of a dramatic set-piece clearly modelled on the typical opening of a Platonic dialogue, as it might be the *Phaedrus*, *Symposium*, or *Theaetetus*. The speakers are Sparkler and Sidonia; and they refer to a friend called Madrigal. Is Sidonia descended from a long line of Spanish aristocrats? Does Madrigal have as his distant ancestor the trans-sexual landlady in *Tales of the City*? Even if the answer is yes (which I doubt), is there any point to any of this? All that these cute names achieve (and there are quite a few more) is to irritate the reader, who has more than enough aggravation already.

For a start, the London that these characters inhabit sounds not at all futuristic, but rather like the pre-medieval phantasmagoria that was drawn so memorably by David Jones in *The Anathemata* in 1952. The Fleet river is there to be crossed (later we find references to Lud's Hill and archers). There is a city wall (with multiple gates, at each of which the orator must speak), a white chapel, a market. There is talk of celebrating the feast of Gog. Moreover, Ackroyd keeps skewing his classical references. Any reader of Plato will see at once that the person to whom Ackroyd is really alluding is not Plato, but rather Plato's Socrates. Anyway, Plato must be turning in his grave to have his name given to, of all low occupations, an orator. Also, a Greek orator never wore a mask: leave that to the even lower profession of actor. So what is going on here? Just the biggest, flattest, most elaborate, and by miles the unfunniest academic joke ever unloaded on a gullible public.

Sparkler and Sidonia provide a kind of trailer of Plato's discourse "On the Condition of Past Ages." Their tidbits tell us as much about their own world as about the past, and geophysically stop us in our tracks. Sidonia says: "There was a period when our ancestors believed that they inhabited a world which revolved around a sun ... They had been told that they lived upon a spherical planet, moving through some kind of infinite space." Cries of astonished incredulity. This, of course, was the deluded Age of Mouldwarp, when (Sidonia again) people were much smaller, with tiny heads and pinpoint eyes. So we are back with the science-trashing mystics, and all we have to do now is figure out whether Ackroyd is backing them or setting them up. (I have to confess that by the end I didn't care all that much which it was; but as we will see, it matters.)

A hint of Ackroyd's technique, and attitude, emerges from a tell-tale quoted remark of Plato's: "Do you know that in the end they believed themselves to be covered by a great net or web?" Oh dear, oh dear, oh dear. What we are being treated to, clearly, is an extended set of variations on that most ancient of all intellectual chestnuts, the infinite capacity of the professorial mind for the dogmatic and ludicrous misinterpretation of evidence regarding past civilizations. To make quite sure we get the point, Plato kicks off in his second oration (we are spared an *in extenso* version of the first one) with an elaborate interpretation of *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection* by Charles D. . . . . (the rest of the name is missing) as a "comic masterpiece" of fiction by Charles Dickens. Quite apart from the literary point, and wit, of this being about on the level of the far-right Mallard Fillmore comic strip (there is a passing reference to "the anecdotes of a comedian, Brother Marx"), it also exhibits some of that strip's attitudes. I found my mind running on Kansas and the Scopes trial, not least on being informed that "only in the Age of Witspell ... was it realized that the petrified shapes found in rock or ice were created to mock or mimic their organic counterparts" and that "each portion of the earth produces its own creatures spontaneously."

Ackroyd is so concerned with getting across his futurist (but in fact all too contemporary) view of Mouldwarp—that is, us—that he largely forgets to give his fourth-millennium society any kind of tangible reality. We have no idea how this London operates, what people do with their lives, even (except for casual references) what they look like. Any details that we glean belong either to a pseudo-classical past (Sparkler's long white robe) or to science-fiction (red-haired Sidonia has a "blue light shining from her"). And then there are the angels. We do not see them ourselves, but they are all around. They are interested in Plato's remarks about evolution. Their wing-tips change color to indicate emotion. A fun afternoon consists of taking a skiff down the Fleet and searching for angels' feathers. No explanation given. No explanation possible.

IN THE INTERVALS of giving lectures, and exchanging bright chit-chat with his soul, Plato produces a really excruciating series of misdefinitions of Mouldwarp terms, which (let the reader be warned) runs on for pages. An antibiotic is a death ray. A dead end is glossed as "a place where corpses were taken." Fiber optic is "a coarse material woven out of eyes." A recreation ground becomes "an area of the city selected for the restoration of past life." Rock music is "the sound of old stones." Had enough? Good. Most of what Plato has to say is an elaboration of such conceits.

And if curiosity remains about the mysterious disasters coyly hinted at in the opening quotations, well, one cause of the Age of Mouldwarp's demise, apart from science, is presented as—get this—the worship of information: "The dimming of the stars and the burning of instruments had many complex causes, but there is every reason to believe that the sacred cult of information was at least one of the symptoms of decline." What we have here is a text that is not only stupefyingly regressive, but also plain loony.

And the literary jokes bore on regardless. E. A. Poe is interpreted as an anonymous E[minent] A[merican] Poe[t], whose *Tales and Histories* offer "the unique record of a lost race," the inhabitants of which "dwelled in very large and very old houses which, perhaps because of climatic conditions, were often covered with lichen or ivy." There is a Platonic-style Academy, and to balance it a sub-Egyptian House of the Dead. In the year 3075, people do not just die and have done

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with it, they vaguely fade away like old soldiers. Plato (described as of Pie Corner, but by now it might as well be Pooh Corner) undertakes to speak on the first ages of the earth. In the tale of Orpheus and Eurydice, Thanatos (Death) sheds ruby tears. We get Cerberus, but no Thracian women or homosexuality. The Apostles are linked to blood, guilt, and sorrow. Angels, we learn, seldom visited earth in those days, for lack of intelligent conversation.

THE END OF Mouldwarp is something again. The "cult of webs and nets" engenders despair. Stars and nebulae vanish because nobody is looking at them: the universe's components cease to be when not studied. Darkness spreads. "They had never understood that they were engaged in acts of magic, and that their universe was an emanation of the human mind. Then the sun went out." Oops. The resentment and the anger that follows comes over as a sort of cosmic Luddism. Nets, webs, screens, signs, machines: all are destroyed in one vast conflagration, a raging holocaust. And then, a new morning: "Only then, in the exhaustion and silent despair which marked the demise of Mouldwarp, did the light of humankind begin its ministry." This light emanates both from the earth and from individuals. There is no more night. It is the dawning of the age of Witspell. This is the old Armageddon scenario in a new pseudo-humanistic guise: the *lux perpetua* of the chiliastic Second Coming written up for the year 2000. Ackroyd may be a writer with a serious reputation, but here he is in the same business as Tim LaHaye.

As human light reappears, anxieties vanish. But note what happens to cheer folks up. A centaur is sighted in Greece. A phoenix duly rises from its own ashes in northern France. Banshees keen outside Dublin. Sirens sing off the Asia Minor coast. There is a resurgence of everything mythical from unicorns to valkyries, except that for Plato they are "the fabric of the old reality." Atlantis, "otherwise known as Avalon or Cockaigne or the Isle of the Blessed," surfaces from the ocean. I wish we were told just where. According to Plato, "it had always lain below the surface of Mouldwarp vision, but now it rose in glory." Dante's Maleborge turns up in Sumatra, and Bunyan's Slough of Despond on the Welsh border. Ackroyd's eschatological future is nothing more than the rebirth of the pre-rational past.

At this point the academic parodist in Ackroyd takes over again, with Geoffrey of Monmouth's re-discovery as the oldest—and hence, of course, the best—surviving source on British history, and various features of London today given fanciful ritual explanations, presumably by fourth-millennium archaeologists. This stuff apparently affected Sparkler and Madrigal much as it did me: when Omatus informs them that Plato's starting yet another oration "at the clerk's well," they both excuse themselves on the grounds of exhaustion. Lucky them, because what follows is a clumping send-up of Freud and his "straight man" Oedipus. Plato's excruciating account of their patter has to be heard to be disbelieved. (' "Tell me, what is your opinion of chair legs and train tunnels?" "Rather out than in, as the bishop—'" and so on.)

ARE WE DONE yet? We are not. We get Egyptian creation myth tangled up with string theory. We learn that in 3075 people only get to work when chosen (though we have no idea what they work at, or who chooses them), and they are proud of the honor. We also gather that rowing races take place, in which nobody is expected to win. Have a nice day. We get another elaborate anthropological joke in the form of a dragged-out misinterpretation of a strip from Alfred Hitchcock's *Frenzy*, to read which is rather like being dragged slowly through a meat-grinder. And worse yet is in store, with hints and guesses applied to a charred fragment from the last section of *The Waste Land* (George [*sic*] Eliot as an African singer, "ieronymo" anagrammatized as "i.e. my room" = "that is my spell"). This is a book that shows its reader no mercy.

But Ackroyd is still not finished. In a patchy take-off from the real Plato's Myth of Er, he sends his own Plato on a symbolic time-traveling journey into the Cave of Mouldwarp. Since up above there was no sun, Plato finds shadows a novelty. (Blurry thinking there: what happens if you get in the blue light emanating from Sidonia?) Of course, the whole episode exists only to serve as an excuse for baffled incomprehension at everything that gets Ackroyd's goat about contemporary English society, from "the inhuman smell of numbers and machines" to cloning, the pursuit of profit, and an obsession with time. (There are no clocks in the fourth millennium.)

It is at this point that Ackroyd's Plato begins to admit that his orations have been "filled with errors and misapprehensions," so much that the Guardians—ah, yes—put him, in default of Socrates, on trial for "corrupting the young by spinning lies and fables." If readers expect Plato's trial to clear up any of the problems that we have encountered along the way, they are in for a big disappointment. The Guardians, clearly not so acclimatized to slippery metaphor as their author, accuse Plato of dreaming up the Cave of Mouldwarp in a drunken stupor. Plato himself muddies the waters further by wondering whether "we are being dreamed by the people of Mouldwarp," adding provocatively: "And what if we were dreaming them?"

He follows this up with the dangerous platitude that ages which refuse to recognize any reality but their own are liable to go under. But despite this, he is acquitted. He wants to sentence himself but he cannot, since there is no longer a charge against him. Since his ego will not let him live on where reactions to him are limited to derision, disregard, or pity, he asks to be escorted beyond the city limits, into permanent exile. As Ackroyd portrays it, the world outside resembles the Bellman's chart in *The Hunting of the Snark*: a "perfect and absolute blank." Exile on these terms is oblivion, and so regarded.

Plato's departure takes place in a barge, down the Fleet, with Sidonia in the prow. By now (once more according to Sparkler and Madrigal) not only are the citizens getting bewildered and restless as a result of Plato's protracted antics, but the angels, too, have left the scene. (They have, presumably, been bored wingless.) And here, at last, at last, Ackroyd's fable ends.

IV.

WHAT ON EARTH is all this about, or for? On the face of it, certainly, *The Plato Papers* seems too vapid a concoction to merit serious attention. It is set in a perfunctorily futuristic context, which is then made the platform for a sour all-out attack on contemporary Western mores. It harks back to the kind of pseudo-antique England celebrated by romantic Catholics such as David Jones or G.K. Chesterton, a reversion further overlaid with borrowings from Plato's Athens. This curdling mixture is then laced with *simpliste* and drawn-out literary or historical or philosophical jokes, most of them agonizingly flat. None of Ackroyd's characters, let alone the London that they inhabit, is even remotely real.

Why, then, waste time and space on such fustian stuff? There are several good reasons. For a start, the failings of this book cannot by any stretch of the imagination be ascribed to mere authorial inadequacy. Peter Ackroyd, the product of a working-class Catholic childhood, gained a double First in English at Cambridge, became Literary Editor of the *Spectator* at the tender age of twenty-four, is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, won the Somerset Maugham Prize for his novel *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde* and both the Whitbread Prize and the Heine-

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mann Award for his biography of T.S. Eliot. Since 1986, he has been chief book reviewer for the London *Times*. He has published five biographies, and *The Plato Papers* is his tenth novel. This record means that anything that Ackroyd writes has to be taken seriously. He is not an amateur.

To read the paeans of praise with which *The Plato Papers* was greeted in the United Kingdom, one might suppose that Ackroyd had blessed the world with a tract combining all the virtues of *Utopia*, the *Paradiso*, and the Sermon on the Mount. Now, a worldly critic must discount a good deal of the hyperbole by reminding himself of the falsities of the London literary universe. But I suspect that the explanation for the enthusiasm is even more disquieting. It appears that it is Ackroyd's message to which some people are resonating.

British cultural journalists who pontificate in the review columns of the *Times* (Ackroyd's own pulpit), the literary weeklies, and the "Sunday heavies" (the *Observer*, the *Sunday Times*, and the *Independent*), have always had a weakness for anyone pushing what Stella Gibbons in *Cold Comfort Farm* mercilessly labelled Asterisked Great Thoughts, a.k.a. the Higher Nonsense; and there is (as I hope I have shown) a fair amount of the Higher Nonsense in *The Plato Papers*. Elsewhere, though mercifully not here, Ackroyd has shown an interest in kinky sex, and black magic, and serial killers such as Jack the Ripper, which certainly can widen an author's readership. But in this new fable of Ackroyd's, it is, I fear, the quasi-philosophical polemic that accounts for the hoopla. *The Plato Papers* turns out to be a minor classic (a pretentious and very minor classic) of whole-hogging reaction.

WHAT ACKROYD'S PLATO attacks in this Mouldwarp of ours is nothing less than its rationally and scientifically constituted foundation. What he finds to praise in Witspell, and in the age that follows it, is its ditching of every axiom of rational thought, its regression to a kind of pre-industrial Luddism, its emphasis on instinct, intuition, and mythical vision, on life as self-generated metaphor. In Ackroyd, unreason is not a dystopia: quite the reverse. It comes across as a cuckoo utopia. In this vision of the eschaton, unreason bids fair to replace science as the definitive illumination of human life.

The creepy sacred wood that Ackroyd explores here has been home to a number of causes, by no means all of them harmless. They include, as we have seen, the sort of Merrie Englande Catholicism peddled by Belloc and Chesterton and David Jones. But this neck of the woods also nurtured the phallic fantasies and the blood-cults of D. H. Lawrence, not to mention the debased inheritors of Bergsonian vitalism. These last—blaming all the ills of modernity on the Enlightenment, on the French Revolution, on cities, and on technology, while seeking to locate genuine reality in myth and in the irrationalist imagination of the artist—opened the door to the worst ideological excesses of the century that has just passed; and they conform, with uncomfortable precision, to the overview served up by Ackroyd's Plato.

Is Ackroyd promoting this dark and nasty view of reality, or is he satirizing it? Therein lies his game. He hedges his bets with uncommon skill, but his own moral angle is about as hard to pin down as that of Thucydides or the real Plato. I suspect, though, that it shares with both these predecessors a taste for authoritarian blueprinting. The more rigid the creed, the greater its attraction; and for dictators, the greater its utility. Even the most innocent enemy of reason and science may end up in bed with some really terrifying monsters.

I do not mean to flatter Ackroyd by making him seem dangerous. His own position, I suspect, is fairly harmless, being for the most part literary, romantic, and nostalgic. Those angels are hard to explain on any other basis. They also suggest that he is expressing some late metastasis of his Catholic upbringing. When Sidonia talks about being joined by the angels "in a dream of my own," claiming that "they whisper to me," and sometimes finds expression in the voices of children—very Victorian, that—what springs to my mind is the end of Newman's famous hymn: "And with the morn those angel faces smile / which I have loved long since, and lost awhile." Newman was also responsible for the observation that "it would be a gain to the country [Great Britain] were it vastly more superstitious." That is the governing idea of *The Plato Papers* exactly.

HOW DID AN allegedly serious writer come up with so regressive and sugary a concoction as *The Plato Papers*? There is an interesting parallel here with the career of José Saramago, who followed up a series of splendid novels, most recently *The History of the Siege of Lisbon* (1996) and *Blindness* (1997), with a little fable even more pathetic than Ackroyd's, *The Tale of the Unknown Island*, which appeared last year. Do these writers—on the face of it so disparate, Saramago the professional Marxist and Ackroyd the not-so-cryptic Catholic—have anything in common? They do. Each was stamped long ago with a dogmatic and authoritarian creed guaranteed to leave its mark on their creative psychology for life.

Ackroyd's literary career offers a remarkable example of the inroads that programming can make on the free will, and never mind the subject's brilliance. At Cambridge, his interests lay almost exclusively in poetry. He came under the influence of teachers and students such as J.H. Prynne and Ian Patterson, who were moving towards the kind of experimental cosmopolitanism represented by John Ashbery and the New York School. After Cambridge he spent two years at Yale, where he wrote his *Notes for a New Culture* (1976). From this, and his published poetry, it became very clear that his literary compass would not work without the magnetic pole of authority.

Ackroyd the cultural acolyte found his master in Modernism. Poetry, he insisted, was about language, and had no further validity; and ever the good party-liner, he tried to write poems according to the formula. The results make for painful reading, and ended in mere incoherence: "The first axiom of this proposition is that the firpppppppppp the the the the the the the the/ spanish fly, my own true/ ttttttttt-toooppp. . ." He brought in allusion, parody, pastiche, and five-finger variations on earlier texts (no wonder he later wrote biographies of Eliot and Pound), but it never seemed to work. "I can connect/ nothing with nothing," Eliot wrote in *The Waste Land*, and this seems to have been Ackroyd's problem, too.

As an escape from what Susan Onega has aptly termed "the modernist prison-house of language," Ackroyd began to flirt with the no less constrictive (if more varied) doctrines of postmodernism, still conceding the artificiality of language while trying at the same time to find room for mythopoeia and transcendentalism. This took him into the business of novel-writing, and a complex self-contradictory system of trawling the past for realities that were also fictional. In *Milton in America* (1996), Ackroyd makes the carefully researched poet flee to the New World in 1660, just before the return of Charles II, and set up that most oxymoronic of institutions, a Puritan paradise, when by rights he should have been back in England writing *Paradise Lost*. Earlier, *The Last Testament of Oscar Wilde*, (1983) its details researched with equal care, had Wilde himself, in brilliantly pastiched style, treating all accounts of him, his own included, as mere literary inventions, packed with inevitable distortions and misreadings. The theoretical constraints might be more

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surreal, but the obscurantism was still very much in place.

PITY THE POST-MODERNIST. You don't need to work your way through, say, a book such as Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* to realize what a quagmire Ackroyd got himself into. Consult only the encyclopedias, and despair. From *A Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, we are referred to experimental techniques (some "perilously close to mere gimmickry"), "an eclectic approach, aleatory writing, parody and pastiche," and, critically speaking, "complete relativism." *The Encyclopedia of Literature and Criticism*, bleating desperately about the apparent impossibility of something now existent coming after the present, offers six competing explanations of post-modernism and leaves us to choose. *The Johns Hopkins Guide to Literary Theory and criticism* regards post-modernism as the "site" of a number of recent intellectual debates, those applicable to Ackroyd including "the relation of an image-dominated consumer society to artistic practice." *The Columbia Dictionary of Modern Literary and Cultural Criticism* stresses "the fragmentation that defines existence," and reminds us that with post-modernist writing "it is not always possible to tell if one is reading an autobiography, a history, a novel, or literary criticism."

That last remark should resonate forcefully with readers of Ackroyd's writing in recent years, particularly (as we have seen) his fiction. But it also suggests what may have happened in *The Plato Papers*. Throughout his career Ackroyd has been looking for, wrestling with, trying to escape, and trying to reconcile with his talent, a whole series of ideological dogmata, principles, party lines, call them what you will. Wherever he turned, he found a certainty, a yardstick. It was in a final desperate effort to break free from this overpowering urge, to stop being an apparatchik to his own rigid and imprisoning psyche, that he took his plunge into the remote future, confident that whatever happened, he would have his praise-chorus to support him. And so indeed it has turned out. But what he didn't bet on was the discovery that, when he got there and could play things his own way, he would have no free-wheeling imagination left to dramatize his new world, and so could do nothing but let loose a ton of bile and nostalgia about what he had left behind. All the way to Witspell, to find only the old resentments and constrictions. Of all the bad jokes cluttering Ackroyd's book, this one is surely the worst. ■

A Seeking People

By ALAN TAYLOR

Inventing the "Great Awakening" by Frank Lambert

(Princeton University Press, 300 pp., $35)

Daughters of Light: Quaker Women Preaching and Prophesying In the Colonies and Abroad, 1700–1775 by Rebecca Larson

(Alfred A. Knopf, 399 pp., $35)

HISTORIANS USED TO treat the colonial period as a precocious preparation for a powerful and autonomous United States eager and able to ignore Europe. They argued that the Atlantic divide and the American environment obliged the colonists to shed their European ways and to create an "exceptional" new culture and society. Captured by their new continent and isolated by the broad Atlantic, the colonists increasingly ignored Britain as irrelevant, until they readily severed the vestigial and irritating tie during the American Revolution. In effect, the Revolution simply brought the political structure into line with the cultural and social independence that had already been achieved.

But more recent historians have a different idea. They argue for an "Atlantic perspective," and emphasize the continuing interdependence of the colonies and the mother country, until it was painfully ruptured by the Revolution. Clustered along the coast, most colonists faced eastward toward the ocean and across to Europe, rather that westward and into the continent. Indeed, the continental interior of dense forests, Indian peoples, and uncertain dimensions was far more mysterious and daunting than an ocean passage. British colonists knew, often by direct and multiple experiences, that the Atlantic was regularly traversed, but nobody knew how to cross the North American continent.

ALAN TAYLOR is a Professor of American History at the University of California at Davis. He is the author of *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (Knopf).

Far from operating as a barrier, the Atlantic was an eighteenth-century bridge that routinely tied colonists to correspondents and institutions in Great Britain. Since overland transportation was painfully slow, difficult, and expensive, eighteenth-century people and goods moved most easily in ships over water. And so a Virginian dwelling beside Chesapeake Bay had faster and surer access to news and goods from London than did a rustic dwelling in an obscure village in northern Britain. The British empire in the eighteenth century was essentially a regulated network of ships and sailors carrying cargoes of consumer goods and bundles of letters, newspapers, and books; and owing to their maritime and commercial orientation, most colonists were far better integrated into the empire than were the Scots Highlanders.

During the early eighteenth century, the colonists enjoyed increasing contact with the mother country. Between 1690 and 1740, the quantity of transatlantic commercial shipping tripled, and newspaper and book publication exploded in both Britain and the colonies. The expanding network of merchant ships carried a growing volume of correspondence and print, enhancing the transatlantic exchange of information. Instead of growing more Americanized over time, the leading colonists became more influenced by English ways. They looked to London as the great metropolis and the arbiter of all fashions, intellectual as well as material. Until the botched British attempts to "reform" the empire during the 1760s and 1770s, the colonists generally felt comfortable within a transatlantic empire that served them so well.

Subscribing to the "Atlantic perspective," Frank Lambert and Rebecca Larson

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treat the empire as unified by the ocean, rather than divided by it. "The American colonies did not form a separate nation before the American Revolution," Lambert observes, "but were part of the British empire, not only politically, under British government, but culturally, as 'part of the expanding periphery of Britain's core culture.'" Instead of limiting their topics and research to the colonies, both writers follow people and ideas to-and-fro across the Atlantic. In effect, Lambert and Larson do not allow the future United States retroactively to define the boundaries of eighteenth-century colonial culture—which was, in fact, transatlantic and increasingly so. In particular, Lambert and Larson can see that the colonies and the mother country shared in a mid-eighteenth-century surge in evangelical religion previously considered uniquely American.

The exceptionalist version of colonial American history made much of a dramatic set of religious revivals begun during the 1730s and peaking in the early 1740s. Labeled "the Great Awakening" (or "the First Great Awakening"), this spate of revivals allegedly produced a distinctively American religious culture that made the American Revolution possible and necessary a generation later. Scholars used to treat the Great Awakening as an integrated and synchronized set of revivals that brought evangelical Protestantism into almost every corner of colonial America. Then in 1982, Jon Butler, an iconoclastic religious historian, dismissed the "Great Awakening" as an "interpretative fiction," created by an 1840s antiquarian to lump together many different, limited, and local revivals that occurred over a thirty-year period.

In partial agreement with Butler, Lambert concedes that the concept of a Great Awakening was invented to exaggerate the connections and the scope of local revivals—but he also insists that the invention predated the 1840s by a century, originating with the revivalists of the 1740s, who did report "a great awakening." The name belonged to their larger invention: a new mode of evangelical revivalism unprecedented in ambition and effects. By delivering especially emotional sermons and conducting prolonged evening prayer meetings, the revivalists brought congregations to the emotional brink of "conversion": the moment when an exhilarating sense of divine grace filled a soul emptied by despair. Without that "New Birth," a soul remained destined to eternal hellfire, and the revivalists believed that only terror could bring people to the liberating shock of conversion.

Still, Lambert notes that the revivalists insisted that they were mere "instruments that God used for his ends, and not the engines of the work." Determined to credit God alone, the revivalists also obscured the critical importance of their publications in constructing models of revival preaching and evangelical conversion. By sharing increasingly standardized accounts of local revivals, evangelical ministers developed a common style and set of expectations. Then, in the similarity of their local revivals, they found the consummate proof that all belonged to God's work rather than their own. Ironically, that conviction increased their exertions to make the most of God's power while it flowed in the land; the illusion of human passivity and complete divine power compelled the evangelists to demand more of themselves and of their congregants. Lambert's objective is to examine "how revivalists themselves wove their own web of meaning which convinced them and thousands of others that they were participating in a glorious 'Work of God.'"

Revivals came only to churches and communities that expected and worked for them—all the while insisting that God alone could revive their faith. Owing to varying ethnic mixtures and seventeenth-century origins, the distribution of denominations varied from colony to colony and region to region. Some denominations—principally the Congregationalists of New England and the Presbyterians of the Middle Atlantic Colonies—nurtured revivalism, while others—chiefly the Church of England in the Southern colonies—did not. Many Presbyterian and Congregationalist communities enacted a cycle where, over a generation, surges in emotional fervor and new conversions alternated with longer intervals of lower energy and fewer New Births.

Until the 1730s, these cycles were localized, varying in intensity and duration from community to community. And revivalism was controversial and divisive. Some Presbyterians and Congregationalists and most Anglicans distrusted evangelical revivalism as too emotional, disruptive, and volatile. They preferred more gradual and rational conversions carefully guided by a patient and learned minister. It was during the 1730s that local revivals became more coordinated and better publicized, capturing wider attention as a common Work of God. The process began in the early 1730s, in the Raritan Valley of eastern New Jersey, with revivals among Presbyterians and the Dutch Reformed. A leading New Jersey revivalist, Reverend Gilbert Tennent, reported the inspirational news to his New England correspondents, including Reverend Jonathan

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Edwards of Northampton, Massachusetts. Ambitious and evangelical, Edwards emulated Tennent by preaching revival with a greater intensity. By dramatically renewing his Northampton congregation, Edwards inspired other Congregational revivals throughout the Connecticut Valley of western Massachusetts and central Connecticut. The revival ebbed in 1735 after the death by suicide of Edwards's own uncle, who had despaired of ever achieving conversion.

Yet the revival lived on, and it achieved a broader fame by breaking into print. Edwards wrote a vivid account, entitled *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprizing Work of God*, which leading Congregationalists published in London in 1737 and Boston in 1738. *A Faithful Narrative* linked the Connecticut Valley and Raritan Valley revivals, overriding their distances in time and place to depict God acting throughout the colonies, and perhaps the entire Protestant world. Widely and avidly read in Britain and the colonies, *A Faithful Narrative* provided models of revival preaching and conversions to guide subsequent evangelical revivals, which then seemed all the more impressive because of their similarity to one another and to their precedents in *A Faithful Narrative*. Evangelicals read the similarities as manifesting God's uniform power, rather than as evidence of Edwards's influential account. Lambert insists that "the *Faithful Narrative* was the vessel that carried the spore of a great awakening from America to Britain in 1737."

The English readers of *A Faithful Narrative* included George Whitefield, a young Anglican minister who had developed an evangelical style at odds with the dominant tone of the Church of England. In 1739, inspired by Edwards's account, Whitefield developed an innovative career as an itinerant evangelical, touring England and Wales to reach poor and laboring people ignored by mainstream Anglicans. Drawing crowds that were too large for churches, and that were anyway uncomfortable in them, he preached conversion to thousands in the streets, the fields, and the parks. Never before had so many people assembled to hear preaching, and never before had so many felt so emotionally engaged in the performance.

ECHOING ACROSS THE Atlantic, the swelling volume of evangelical print escalated revivalism on both shores of the British empire. Edwards's words had crossed the Atlantic into London print to inspire Whitefield. In turn, London newsprint passed in ships to the colonies to convey sensational and inspirational accounts of Whitefield's impact in England. His immense crowds in London assured Whitefield of an eager audience in the colonies, for the colonists paid cultural deference to the great metropolis as the arbiter of all fashions. The more they read, the more the colonists longed to hear and see Whitefield preach.

In 1739, Whitefield crossed the Atlantic to tour the colonies, ostensibly to raise funds for an orphanage in Georgia but mainly to export his form of evangelical theater to new audiences. His American tour reflected the transatlantic integration of the British empire into an increasingly common market of goods and ideas. Whitefield benefited from the proliferation of shipping and newspapers; the improved network of roads; and the greater density of settlement, which promised larger crowds. His preaching tour also furthered the process of integration by enlisting colonists into the first cultural movement that was transatlantic and intercolonial. Traveling from Maine to Georgia, Whitefield probably appeared before most of the colonists during his visit in 1739–1741, becoming the first celebrity (other than the king) known throughout the empire. Lambert remarks that "the evangelist arrived as a long-expected, fashionable import, and colonists eagerly anticipated his coming much the way late-twentieth-century Americans await the latest rock star."

Although nominally an Anglican, Whitefield was primarily sponsored by Presbyterian ministers in the Middle Colonies and by Congregationalists in New England. Sharing his evangelical Calvinism, they hoped that Whitefield's sensational preaching would provoke a renewed wave of conversions. Although people of many denominations attended his immense open-air services, Whitefield evoked a relatively tepid response beyond the Presbyterian and Congregational orbits. The Anglicans were especially cool, distrusting his emotional preaching and ecumenical support, and so Whitefield drew his smallest crowds and made the slightest impact in the Southern colonies.

Despite those limits, his preaching disseminated and coordinated revivalism in more places and with greater fervor than ever before. In Philadelphia, Whitefield exhorted:

> Would any Thing I could do or suffer influence your Hearts, I think I could bear to pluck out my Eyes, or even to lay down my Life for your Sakes.... But such Power only belongeth unto the Lord,—I can only invite;...It is his Property to take away the Heart of Stone, and give you a Heart of Flesh.

Especially in New England, the revivals of 1740–1742 greatly exceeded those of the 1730s in emotional intensity and geographic range. Whitefield's spectacular impact alarmed religious conservatives, who preferred a more cautious and reasoned faith. They denounced his itinerancy as a dangerous innovation, and they disdained the emotional audiences as "enthusiastic," an eighteenth-century pejorative term that denoted madness and fanaticism.

TO COUNTER THE conservative attacks that the revivals were erratic and random, Reverend Thomas Prince, an evangelical Congregationalist from Boston, collected dozens of reports describing the local revivals in remarkably similar terms. From 1743 to 1745, Prince published these accounts in his magazine *Christian History*. The similarities reflected the influence of a questionnaire circulated by Prince and based on Edwards's models of revivalism and conversion codified in *A Faithful Narrative*. Lambert writes that "the result was that, *as reported*, local revivals assumed a greater degree of uniformity than they did *as experienced*."

No American chauvinist, Prince compiled similar revival accounts from Germany, Scotland, England, and Wales—as well as the American colonies—to demonstrate the common pattern to God's power. As was characteristic among colonial intellectuals, Prince claimed importance for American developments by placing them in a transatlantic context. Feeling provincial, colonists especially needed the reassurance that God was active in the mother country. In 1749, a New England minister explained to a Scottish correspondent that

> [i]t would tend to cause this concert [of revivals] to prevail much more here, if we could hear that it was greatly spreading and prevailing on your side of the Atlantick, where it was first begun, and from whence it was first proposed to us. On the contrary, it will undoubtedly be a discouragement to people here, if they hear that the matter decays and languishes, or is come to a stand.

It is especially revealing that the New England minister deferred to Britain as the source of the expanding revivalism, which actually began in New Jersey.

By emphasizing literary inventions, Lambert often questions the authenticity of "a great awakening" beyond the accounts framed about the revivals by the evangelicals. He is most persuasive and interesting in finding efficacy in the accounts as they framed the expectations to stimulate remarkably common revivals. By believing in their own story, the evan-

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gelicals did make a Great Awakening. Often, however, Lambert undermines this insight by doubting that anything knowable operated beyond the published tissue of cultural constructions: "Historians, then, who seek to explain the state of religion in mid-eighteenth-century colonial America confront an array of fictions, inventions and counter-inventions, from which they construct their own 'interpretive fictions.'"

In fact, Lambert cannot find a Great Awakening beyond the web of print produced by one segment of American evangelicals. His book relies almost exclusively on printed works by or about Congregationalists and Presbyterians, to the neglect of unpublished documents and of sources from the many other religious denominations. Relying upon the standard printed sources long familiar to historians, Lambert gives an interesting interpretive twist to Whitefield's *Journals*, Edwards's *Faithful Narrative*, and Prince's *Christian History*; but he very rarely ventures into the archives to find new manuscript evidence that could more dramatically expand our understanding of the Great Awakening.

Reiterating the conventional Congregational and Presbyterian version, Lambert relies upon the usual suspects—Tennent, Edwards, Whitefield, and Prince—and the standard events—the Raritan and Northampton revivals, Whitefield's tours, the conservative reaction, and Prince's compilation. As a result, Lambert misses the opportunity, suggested by most recent scholarship, to find an authentic and restless spiritual hunger that transcended denominational bounds and relied primarily on oral performances that only rarely passed into print. Taking his Congregational and Presbyterian sources too literally, Lambert awards them a monopoly over revivalism, and joins them in pronouncing the revivals dead by 1745.

Ululu

After the crossfire of words we lay in bed under cover of dark.
I think you dropped into an obliterating sleep.
Hearing the strange banshee sound
—a curious mixture of a crying cat and the keen of a loon—
I figured it must be the monkey of these parts you told me of.
It had to be trapped and hurt, perhaps in its final throes.
Asleep, I dreamed my body was washed up by the ocean's
procession of waves
that I'd lost myself in after our latest tempest and my soul
entered this creature high in the trees, ululating to the
emptiness of the night.

Greg Delanty

In fact, as Rebecca Larson's book demonstrates for the Quakers, the evangelical fervor of the mid-eighteenth century affected almost every denomination of Protestants. Lambert especially neglects the more radical and less print-oriented wing of colonial evangelicals: the poorly educated but charismatic Separates and Baptists who became the most dynamic American revivalists after 1745. During the 1750s and 1760s, they carried the legacies of the Great Awakening southward far beyond its origins in New England and New Jersey. One measure of this book's limited perspective is the complete omission of Isaac Backus, the preeminent Baptist leader to emerge from the Great Awakening.

Inventing the "Great Awakening" also disappoints by covering the same material treated more effectively in Lambert's interesting and important first book, *"Pedlar in Divinity": George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770*, which appeared in 1994. Given the extensive overlap of sources, subjects, and characters (especially Whitefield, who dominates the second volume nearly as much as the first one), *Inventing the "Great Awakening"* reads like an inferior draft of a better book. The market metaphors that worked so well in *Pedlar in Divinity* become tedious by repetition in *Inventing the "Great Awakening"*: "While they opposed the regulated religious market defined by parish boundaries, and though they sought to compete in an open religious market, revivalists nevertheless sought a monopoly."

A more daring and comprehensive plunge into the manuscript records of local churches and documents by more obscure people would have revealed a far more vibrant, extensive, and enduring Great Awakening more real than an endless, mirrored hall of interpretative fictions. Lambert might retort that he did not set out to write a comprehensive history of mid-eighteenth-century colonial religion; that he needed only published works by Congregationalists and Presbyterians to fulfill his limited goal of demonstrating their fictive elements; and that he merely followed a long scholarly tradition in his narrow focus on the two most literate denominations. By settling for so little, however, Lambert necessarily reiterates Jon Butler's own "interpretative fiction": the insistence that the so-called Great Awakening was brief and limited.

Although ostensibly addressing a more modest topic, Rebecca Larson offers a deeper and more daring probe into colonial religious life. To recover the long-obscured lives of Quaker women preachers, Larson ventures far beyond print sources into a diverse array of previously untapped manuscript letters, diaries, journals, and church records from many archives in both Great Britain and the United States. From new sources, she documents ordinary people with extraordinary experiences to reveal eighteenth-century spirituality from a provocative new angle. Instead of the oft-studied Congregational and Presbyterian ministers, Larson introduces a diverse and intriguing new cast, including Susanna Freeborn of Rhode Island, Esther Palmer of New York, Catharine Payton of England, and Abigail Craven of Ireland.

More than an exceptional few, at least 1,300 Quaker women served as preachers between 1700 and 1775 in the transatlantic British empire. They reached large audiences, for Quakers comprised the third (or fourth) largest denomination in the colonies, after the Congregationalists, Anglicans, and perhaps Presbyterians. During the early eighteenth century, Quakers prevailed in Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, western New Jersey, and the North Carolina backcountry. Many more Quakers lived in Great Britain, especially in Wales and northern England, and among the Anglo-Irish.

Quakers zealously worked to maintain the connections between their distant meetings throughout the British empire. Regular correspondence and a steady cycling of traveling preachers linked the Quakers into "one transatlantic community." Larson notes, "The itinerant ministers became shared points of reference for far-flung Friends on opposite sides of the Atlantic, helping to forge a common Quaker culture with their preaching." Like the Congregationalists and Presbyterians, colonial Quakers deferred to the cultural authority of preachers from Britain. In Boston, the English preacher Mary Weston noted, "Many Friends were at [the meeting], expecting some great Things from a Londoner." But colonial Quaker preachers also enjoyed a cachet in Britain among Quakers curious about their more exotic fellow seekers from America.

Larson's Quaker female preachers are especially interesting because they contradict so many common assumptions in American religious history and American women's history. We lament, with good

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cause, that early American women produced so few records that survive; but Larson finds numerous preachers who left extensive and revealing documents. Most colonial women rarely ventured beyond their home farms and villages; but Larson presents women who traveled thousands of miles, enduring the dangers and the rigors of the Atlantic and the frontier. Historians usually postpone to the middle of the nineteenth century the struggle by women to speak in public before audiences that included men; but Larson reveals women who routinely and authoritatively preached to audiences of both genders, all ages, and curious non-Quakers as well as devout Friends.

Larson also demonstrates the importance of Quaker women in exposing and testing the limits of convention long before the female reformers of the nineteenth century. All other Christian denominations barred women from the ministry. To justify a male monopoly on preaching, they cited the Apostle Paul, who insisted "But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence"; and "if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home; for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." But Quakers found alternative scriptural injunctions, including one by the Apostle Paul: "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Jesus Christ."

THE QUAKERS BEGAN as a radical religious movement in Britain during the 1650s, a decade of political upheaval that fomented apocalyptic expectations. Sensing the approaching millennium, devout seekers felt God's power within their own souls and distrusted external authorities, including pompous bishops and learned ministers. The seekers called themselves the Friends of Truth and rallied to the charismatic preaching of George Fox, a common tradesman who felt divinely inspired. They became commonly known as "Quakers" because one of their preachers claimed that they alone quaked before the power of God.

The Quakers insisted that every true Christian found and nurtured an "Inner Light" that provided access to the Holy Spirit. The Inner Light offered immediate divine revelation and guidance that trumped even the Bible and certainly all learning obtained in this world. Rejecting a paid and learned clergy, the Quakers practiced an egalitarian worship by gathering to hear the Inner Light through the voices of the truly converted and specially inspired. The gender of the body did not matter, for the words came from God.

After 1670, as the apocalypse seemed less imminent, the Quakers moderated their public fervor and institutionalized a hierarchy of meetings to achieve a greater conformity. Larson notes that "the uninhibited, ecstatic, confrontational Quaker preacher of the mid-seventeenth century was evolving into the more introspective quietist of the eighteenth century." Since the Quakers clung to their belief in the Inner Light and the equality of all souls, they preserved female preaching and established parallel meetings for women to share in the church governance. At the same time, thousands of Quakers emigrated to the colonies, stretching their network of meetings across the Atlantic.

Any Quaker could speak in meeting, but a few especially articulate and inspired people took the lead. Formally recognized as "Public Friends," the adepts sat as a group in front of the congregation on an elevated gallery. When a Public Friend felt summoned by God to travel to preach to other meetings, he or she applied to his or her local and monthly meeting for a certificate affording permission. Receiving no salaries, the Public Friends worked at some temporal employment and, during journeys, depended upon the charity of meetings and prosperous patrons. Keenly anticipated by their hosts, the traveling Public Friends brought new voices to distant meetings, which helped to renew fervor and maintain the ties of a common faith. And their published memoirs circulated among Quakers, holding up female as well as male preachers as paragons of spirituality.

Meetings had to watch carefully for signs of special inspiration in any member, male or female. The members discouraged idle prattlers and ambitious blowhards devoid of a divine calling—but members also needed to encourage anyone who apparently offered "immediate revelation of the Spirit of God," lest they defy the Holy Spirit in His choice of preachers. And God chose obscure people, including women, almost as often as He favored prosperous men. In 1718 in rural Pennsylvania, for example, a young and impoverished maidservant named Jane Fenn felt a divine call to preach, an inner voice that commanded: "I have chosen thee a vessel from thy youth to serve me, and to preach the Gospel of salvation to many people; and if thou wilt be faithful, I will be with thee unto the end of time, and make thee an heir of my kingdom."

Feeling unworthy, Fenn struggled to suppress that divine call for fear of embarrassing herself and offending her meeting. Instead of discouraging Fenn, the members noted her struggle and encouraged her calling. Her patrons included a male preacher and her wealthy employer, who released Fenn from service and financially supported her travels throughout the colonies and to the British Isles. No other denomination would have done the same for a woman, especially one of such low status in the world.

IRONICALLY, BY CLAIMING submission and service to God, select women obtained greater confidence and authority in a society that ordinarily limited their options. In 1724, Elizabeth Webb wrote to the son of another female preacher: "Thy mother is become very courageous in riding thru deep waters and over rocky mountains beyond what I could expect. She says fear is taken away from her and that she is borne up by a secret hand." Although not self-consciously feminist, they expanded the usual female sphere of activity as an effect of their divine calling. Quaker fathers and husbands relinquished their patriarchal claims on daughters and wives to accept their long absences preaching in distant places. Often Quaker husbands had to care for infant children when God summoned their wives away to preach. The priority of divine service to family claims appeared when the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting authorized Ann Dillworth to visit England as a preacher but denied the similar application by her preacher husband—apparently because he seemed insufficiently inspired.

Larson challenges the usual assumption that eighteenth-century Quakerism had grown so spiritually inert that the Friends felt alienated from the evangelical Great Awakening. She shows the Quakers engaged in the same struggle between maintaining group cohesion and encouraging a potentially divisive fervor. The female preachers certainly wrote and preached in an evangelical vein meant to provoke spiritual conversions; they, too, expected sinners to pass from despair into resignation to receive liberating uplift. With all the fervor of other evangelicals, mid-century Quaker preachers denounced spiritual indifference and exhorted moral reform, stricter church discipline, and renewed conversions. Mary Weston sounded remarkably like Jonathan Edwards in her "dreadful Apprehension of being cast into the Lake that burns with Fire and Brimstone" for "gratifying my vain Mind in the Delights, Pleasures & Pastimes of a deluding World." Mary Peisley seemed to echo Gilbert Tennent when she denounced most Quaker elders as "dry, withered, fruitless trees, twice dead, plucked up by the roots, being rich in words and expressions of former experience, but out of the power of Truth."

In their own ways, the Quakers anticipated and contributed to the Great Awakening. Their itinerating preachers of transatlantic celebrity long preceded

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Whitefield and probably prepared his way. Quakers also annually gathered by the thousands from great distances to hear conversion preached by multiple preachers in open settings, decades before Whitefield and his many emulators. In their long-standing emphasis on conversion, extemporaneous preaching, and a divine calling to preach (as opposed to reason, written sermons, and a learned clergy), the Quakers established the style that evangelical Congregationalists and Presbyterians later emulated in a louder vein. After hearing Rachel Wilson preach in England, George Whitefield introduced himself to praise her as a kindred spirit. Although Frank Lambert ignores the Quaker sources from a conviction that the Society of Friends resisted revivalism, Rebecca Larson reveals that from 1732 to 1734 their Philadelphia Yearly Meeting recognized 100 new preachers—an unprecedented surge indicating a burst in fervor simultaneous with the Raritan and Northampton revivals.

Far from avoiding the Great Awakening, the Quakers more fully lived up to the radical social implications of the revival challenge to temporal authority. Far more than their Congregational, Presbyterian, and Baptist counterparts, the Quaker ministers obliged their churches to demand sweeping social reforms. Under pressure from their meetings, most colonial Quaker leaders reaffirmed their pacifism by withdrawing from politics in wartime. In 1758, the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting barred Quaker slaveholders from church leadership; and in 1776 it disowned them from membership. In a society premised on slavery, the Quakers became the lone denomination systematically to seek abolition during the eighteenth century.

By the 1760s, female Public Friends attracted remarkable public attention and respect from non-Quaker audiences and officials, who increasingly came to hear them preach. Indeed, the female preachers drew larger and more diverse crowds than did their male brethren. In 1769, the English Quaker Rachel Wilson toured the colonies, everywhere drawing packed houses and newspaper praise from non-Quakers. In Newport, Rhode Island, a Congregational minister extolled Wilson as "a pious sensible woman."

Larson attributes the new acceptance and the new interest primarily to an elite intellectual climate that promoted religious toleration of any group that included people of sober virtues and respectable fortunes. But the new attention also registered the more evangelical and ecumenical orientation of the popular culture in the wake of the Great Awakening. Larson notes that "the new religious intensity had unified as much as it had divided, by fracturing barriers between religious groups." Less bonded to their own denominations and more eager for spontaneous spirituality, colonists (and Britons) more readily sampled the increasing variety of traveling preachers. By the 1760s, thousands of non-Quakers were as prepared to hear God through a sojourning female Quaker as from their resident, male, and learned minister. Wilson aptly characterized her many non-Quaker listeners in Boston as "a Seeking pepol."

Neither Frank Lambert nor Rebecca Larson find a colonial culture alienated from Great Britain and headed for Revolution. By revealing the common religious culture of the eighteenth century, they suggest that the American Revolution ruptured a shared world, reversing instead of fulfilling the social and cultural trends of the previous half-century. The pacifist Quakers certainly experienced the Revolution as a catastrophe that disrupted their cherished contacts across the Atlantic. That Revolution then created a nationalism that long needed to reimagine and to reconfigure its colonial past into a steady trajectory away from Great Britain and into the American continent, obscuring the lost transatlantic world of George Whitefield and Rachel Wilson. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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people need to be trained to do it.

Similarly, it makes no sense to suggest that teachers' unions maintain a "grip on the hiring (and firing) process" in our schools. Hiring and firing are still done by school boards and administrators. While we advocate testing of new teachers and due process before a teacher can be fired, we do not control the process. Management does.

SANDRA FELDMAN
President
American Federation of Teachers
Washington, D.C.

Peace process

TO THE EDITORS:

I am writing to correct a complete misrepresentation of the events at the 1988 Peace and Freedom Party convention in California ("Coming Soon to a Presidential Campaign Near You," by David Grann, December 13). During a telephone interview with Grann, I explained that Lenora Fulani and company came to the Peace and Freedom convention with a bevy of registered Democrats and tried to take it over. But the credentials committee would only allow the delegates who were registered with Peace and Freedom to vote.

After making many phone calls to Fred Newman and realizing they could not run or vote in the convention, Fulani and company took a walk. Several candidates spoke for the nomination, and a vote was taken in which I was chosen to be the candidate. The California secretary of state, a carryover Democrat, used Fulani's protest as an excuse to deny the Peace and Freedom Party ballot representation (he calculated that the Peace and Freedom votes would end up with the Democrats).

If you will correct Grann's statement that "[i]n another, more devastating operation, the [New Alliance Party] allegedly 'stole' the presidential nomination of the leftist Peace and Freedom Party by infiltrating its ranks just hours before the party's convention and handing the nomination to Fulani," I will again give you an inside explanation of the unholy alliance between Buchanan and Fulani, which I elaborated upon in Grann's interview with me. Unfortunately Grann or the editor left it out of the article, and I have not seen it printed elsewhere.

HERBERT G. LEWIN
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

DAVID GRANN REPLIES:

It is hard to understand exactly what Herbert G. Lewin considers a "complete misrepresentation." Others who attended the Peace and Freedom Party convention, as well as press reports at the time—not to mention Lewin himself—describe Lenora Fulani's people infiltrating the convention hall hours before the vote and then paralyzing the convention with parliamentary tactics. It got so bad that the attendees couldn't even agree to adjourn for lunch. Finally, at least according to press reports, Lewin was nominated president, but Fulani's forces declared his nomination illegal. More than half of the delegates walked out and held their own convention that night, where they nominated Fulani. As a result, the courts, citing disarray, invalidated Lewin's nomination and withheld a ballot line from the Peace and Freedom Party for the first time in 20 years. Meanwhile, Fulani ended up on the ballot as an independent candidate. In other words, the Fulani forces managed to steal the nomination from Lewin—a fact we both agree was an injustice. ■

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JAFFA DIARIST

Pat Answer

DANIEL PATRICK MOYNIHAN didn't wait for Super Tuesday to deliver his eulogy for Bill Bradley: "He fought handsomely, gallantly, and right to the end." The former New Jersey senator might have fought a little more gallantly had his biggest New York supporter not declared his candidacy over before the citizens of the Empire State even went to the polls. But Bradley's March 7 nightmare went far beyond New York—it stretched, literally, from sea to shining sea. He lost in 16 jurisdictions, from Maine to California. Overall, the great hope of high-minded left-wing populism won less than 20 percent of California's Democratic primary vote. Ted Kennedy and Jesse Jackson and Gary Hart and Paul Tsongas each at least won a primary somewhere. In his general-election massacre, even George McGovern won Massachusetts.

MOYNIHAN JUSTIFIED HIS EARLY, much-trumpeted endorsement of Bradley by insisting that Al Gore couldn't win. By this assertion, Moynihan presumably meant that, in the November election, Gore, unlike Bradley, couldn't and wouldn't attract the independent vote. Moynihan's blithe wisdom was widely repeated, and it soon became one of those truisms no one could question without being ridiculed. I was ridiculed plenty. This little orthodoxy even survived the fact that in those states where independents could vote in either primary, the people the pundits had categorized as Bradley supporters in the end voted for John McCain. In fact, in the media-staged matchups between the insurgent candidates of the two parties, McCain won the independents every time. And he won them despite the fact that on issues dear to the hearts and minds of suburban swing voters—abortion rights, the environment, gun control—Bradley was on their side and McCain was not. Now, on Super Tuesday, Gore beat Bradley handily among independents as well. The Bradley campaign, so well-financed, so appealing to voters disaffected by eight years of Bill Clinton, and so eagerly projected by journalists who couldn't imagine a political liability Gore didn't have, was a fantasy. Not exactly a fantasy like the Alan Keyes campaign, but a fantasy nonetheless.

MY WIFE AND I VOTED FOR GORE IN the Massachusetts primary by absentee ballot and then departed for a three-month stay in Israel. It is from the gorgeous ancient city of Jaffa (now part of Tel Aviv) that we have followed the past two weeks of the campaign, mostly on CNN and in the *International Herald Tribune*, *The Jerusalem Post*, and the English-language edition of *Ha'aretz*. Rupert Murdoch's Sky News and the BBC, for their part, do not seem much interested in American politics—the Mozambican baby born in a treetop got more attention on global television than did the Super Tuesday primaries.

YOU CAN'T GET *THE NEW YORK TIMES* here, and I miss it, but not enough to look at it online. I do read TheStreet.com regularly on the Web. But of course I do—it's a venture that I cofounded with my friend Jim Cramer (and, if I may indulge in a little parenthetical advertising, it delivers the kind of valuable stock-related information and analysis available literally nowhere else). The local press covers the American presidential contest from the Israeli perspective, and so no one here would be surprised that, given Gore's long-standing record on the Middle East, Jewish voters favored the vice president by lopsided margins. But, then, no one in the United States or Israel ever projected a big Bradley swing among Jews in the first place. Overall, watching an American campaign from overseas is just as good (or bad) as watching it at home. CNN abroad is like CNN in America, and the *Herald Tribune* is, in many ways, very much like the *Times*, at least as regards political coverage.

THE MEDIA (INCLUDING, MUCH OF the time, THE NEW REPUBLIC) treated this primary season as if it were happening solely among Republicans. That's partly because the GOP had multiple primaries between New Hampshire and Super Tuesday, while the Democrats did not. And it's partly because McCain won New Hampshire, while Bradley lost it. But it's also because reporters fell in love with the senator from Arizona and not the former senator from New Jersey. The press looked hard for life in the Bradley campaign, and so, when they did cover the Democratic race, they focused on him.

WHEN BRADLEY COLLAPSED UTTERLY last night, CNN did give the vice president some airtime. But the networks quickly reverted to their fixation on Republicans, and we watched George W.'s endless blather about "reform" and "renewal." No wonder Gore challenged Bush to twice-a-week debates from the end of the conventions till Election Day.

BRADLEY HOPED TO MAKE BIG DENTS in Gore's support among racial minorities. He publicly vied for Al Sharpton's support, only to find it unattainable because the con-man reverend, a shrewd if not honorable man, wouldn't buck the consensus of his constituency that Gore was its certified friend. (Let me admit that I believe Gore himself has given Sharpton some very undeserved slack of the sort that would outrage him if it were given by a Republican to a comparable demagogue, like, say, David Duke.) Bradley also banked on the support of the black socialist theologian Cornel West. West is a big man on the Harvard University campus, which I am not, and, when he started flying around the country with Bradley (and as one of Bradley's very few advisers), I feared that his cachet among the black citizenry would bring Bradley big rewards at the polls. It was Henry Louis ("Skip") Gates Jr., one of West's and my Harvard colleagues, who assured me that West has no particular cachet among African Americans, and certainly not political cachet. Gates was right. West may well have political clout with a rarefied species of Cambridge whites, but not among the black electorate. In any event, Gore received 84 percent of the black votes cast on Super Tuesday. And I bet that number will be even higher on November 7.

SUPER TUESDAY WAS NO SURPRISE TO me. As readers of TNR know, I have thought for many years that the encounter between Gore and the nation's citizenry is one of those phenomena in which personage and public both grow. The media do not express their new appreciation of Gore quite this way. But gone from the prints and from the tube are the tired images of a boring Gore, a wooden Gore, an inauthentic Gore, a pedantic Gore. Reporters and commentators have finally realized that George W. is far from smart and that it's time to stop holding Gore's brains against him. Suddenly there is no fatal Clinton overhang for the Gore candidacy. Suddenly Gore has wit and grace, wisdom and passion. The mandate of heaven, as the Chinese used to put it, has fallen not on Gore but to him. Even Pat Moynihan, now a bit singed, has admitted that Gore will win. And I'm taking odds.

MARTIN PERETZ

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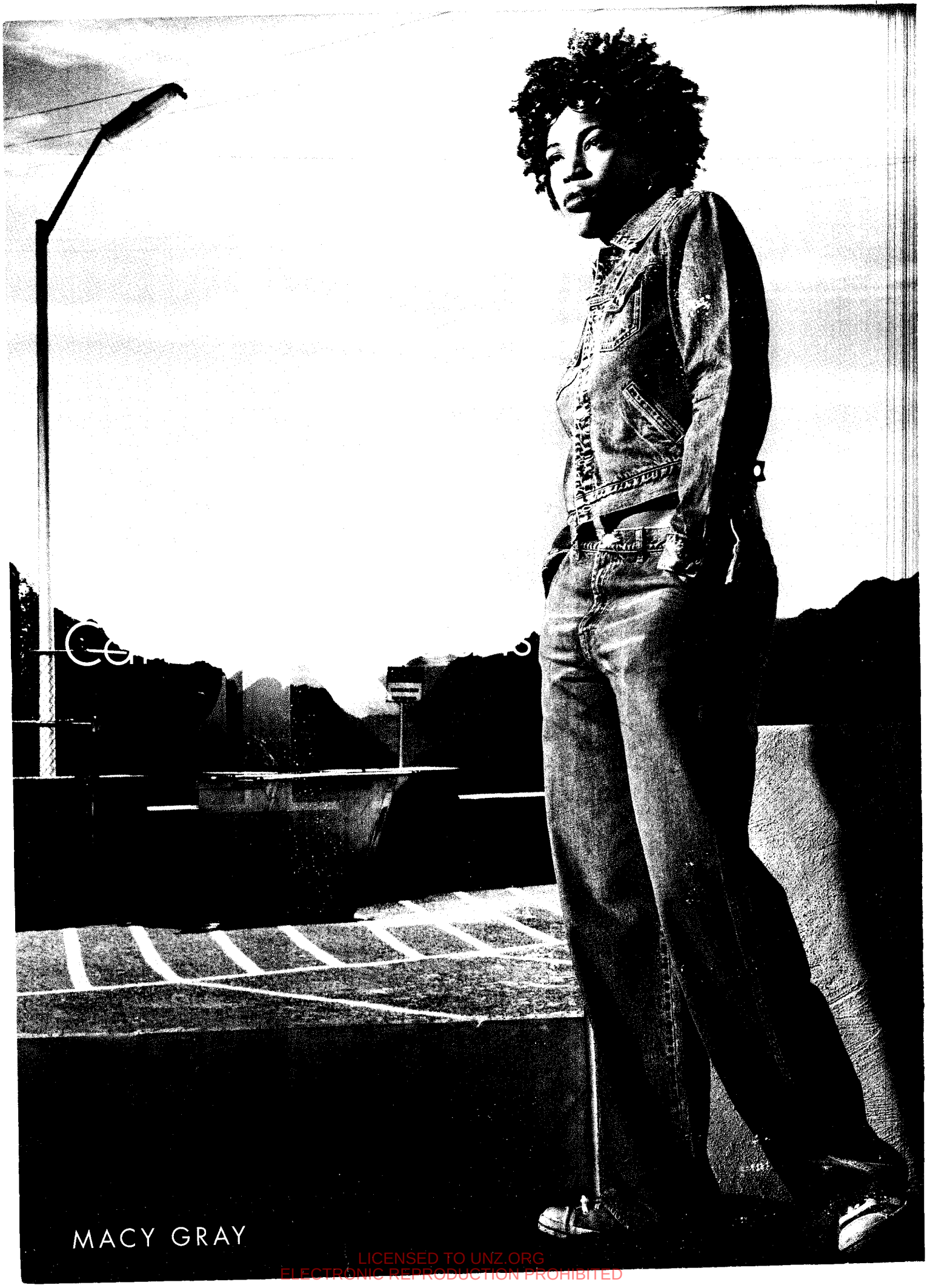

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